



openawards

# Access to Higher Education

2022/2023

PROVIDER HANDBOOK

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## 1. Welcome and Introduction

Welcome to the Open Awards Access to Higher Education Provider Handbook.

The Access to Higher Education (HE) Diploma is a widely recognised qualification that prepares adults for entry to higher education. The Access to HE Diploma is available to learners aged 17+. Access to HE provision is regulated by the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA), ensuring it meets rigorous quality requirements.

This handbook aims to give a comprehensive overview of the processes required to deliver Open Awards' Access to HE Diplomas. The handbook is the primary reference for all those involved in the delivery, assessment and quality assurance of the Access to HE Diplomas.

Following the guidance within this handbook will ensure that all parties meet the requirements of the QAA Licensing Criteria for Access Validating Agencies, including the requirements of the QAA Grading Scheme.

QAA's Extraordinary Regulatory Framework (ERF) 2021-22 applies to any continuing learners who registered on their Access to HE Diploma before 1<sup>st</sup> August 2022 and who have not yet completed. The ERF was designed to support Access to HE Diploma learners during the pandemic in a fair, flexible and equitable way. References to the ERF throughout this document follow the format of this paragraph and apply only to learners registered before 1<sup>st</sup> August 2022.

Any adaptations to delivery, assessment or Diploma content that relate to learners registered in 2021-21 under the ERF must have been implemented by 31<sup>st</sup> July 2022. No adaptations can be implemented after this date.

QAA may amend or add criteria within the academic year, aiming to continually improve the quality of Access to HE. This will result in Open Awards needing to amend our processes. On these occasions, Open Awards will ensure to notify you of the changes as soon as possible and provide support on implementing any changes.

We hope that you find this handbook useful and informative. If you have any questions about the information provided here, please contact us on 0151 494 2072 or [customerservices@openawards.or.uk](mailto:customerservices@openawards.or.uk).

Open Awards hold all information about your provider, key contacts, and your learners securely on our database and will only use it for the purposes provided. You will find full details on how we use and protect your information at Open Awards in our [Privacy Notice](#). The Privacy Notice gives you details on:

- Your rights in relation to the information we hold;
- How we keep it secure;
- The type of information we collect and how we use it;
- Who we share information with;
- How long we hold information for.

## Why Work with Open Awards?

Open Awards exists to Change Lives Through Learning. We know that Access to HE Diplomas require commitment and dedication from both staff and learners. We believe that it is our duty to ensure that all Access to HE providers feel supported and confident to work effectively with their learners. It is vital, therefore, that we work collaboratively with providers to ensure that everything we do is learner-focused and to the highest possible standards. Together we can provide learners with the best possible opportunity to progress onto Higher Education.

Our values underpin our way of working; we will remain in ongoing dialogue with you throughout the academic year (and much prefer talking through any shared problems) so that you have the support needed to provide the best possible Access to HE experiences to your learners.



## 2. The Access to HE Diploma

### Overview

The Access to HE Diploma is regulated by the Quality Assurance Agency for HE (QAA). It is a qualification preparing people that generally do not have traditional qualifications for study at degree level. This is the significance of the Access to HE Diploma, providing an opportunity to support and change lives and is why Open Awards supports it. Most Access to HE Diplomas can be completed in one academic year, however, you can also study part-time over two or more years.

The Access to HE Diploma is widely recognised by most UK universities, many of whom actively encourage applications from Access to HE learners. Each year, around 20,000 Access to HE learners apply for a degree course at a UK university to study in a wide range of subjects. The Access to HE Diploma is included on the UCAS Tariff with points ranging from 45 to 144 Tariff points depending on the grades achieved by individual learners.

### The structure of an Access to HE Diploma

All Open Awards Access to HE Diplomas are divided into a set of units which are combined to produce a coherent programme of learning. Diploma titles reflect the intended progression route or main area of study, e.g. Access to HE Diploma (Nursing, Midwifery and Allied Professions), or Access to HE Diploma (Humanities).

Each unit has set learning outcomes and assessment criteria which describe what a learner will be able to do, know or understand upon completion.

Each unit is allocated a credit value, with each credit designed to determine what a learner might reasonably expect to achieve in ten hours of learning – including directed/ supervised learning and independent or private learning.

Open Awards units are either 3 or 6 credits each. To achieve an Access to HE Diploma, learners complete a programme of learning which includes units in relevant subject areas to prepare them for their intended Higher Education progression route.

In total, learners will complete 60 credits. For each unit successfully completed, learners are awarded credits which build towards the required 60 credits.

The Access to HE Diploma comprises of 45 credits from level 3 graded units related to the academic subject of the Diploma and 15 credits from ungraded level 2 or 3 units.

Diploma titles are approved by our validation panels with a specific rule of combination of units. Details can be found in the Diploma Guides.

The specific combination of units delivered within a course to meet the rules of combination will be approved by Open Awards in advance of delivery.

There is no overall, single grade for the Access to HE Diploma.

A grade of pass, merit or distinction is awarded for each level 3 graded unit.

For graded Level 3 units, the standard of performance required for a pass grade is the minimum required to meet the specified assessment criteria for the learning outcomes of the unit. Students who do not achieve the specified learning outcomes for a unit cannot be awarded credit for that unit. The unit is therefore not eligible for grading.

The grade awarded for each unit is shown on the achievement transcript that is issued with Access to HE Diplomas. The transcript also shows how many credits were awarded for each successfully completed graded or ungraded unit.

Providers recommend grades for each graded academic unit following assessment and internal verification. These recommendations are subject to external moderation by Open Awards and not finalised until after the [Final Awards Board \(FAB\)](#).

**Learners must be made aware that any grades recorded by the tutor/ assessor are subject to change until they are agreed by Open Awards at the Final Awards Board.**

### 3. Provider validation

#### Becoming an Approved Open Awards Access to HE Provider

If you would like to offer an Access to HE Diploma with us, the first thing you need to do is become an approved Open Awards provider. This involves completing a simple Provider Recognition Application form that asks you to provide us with information on how you plan to develop, deliver and manage your courses.

All information requested is mandatory and required to ensure that we comply with our regulatory obligations with QAA. The process will review the information provided, along with relevant policies and procedures, against Open Awards' policies and procedures, and QAA Licensing Criteria. The approval process is robust, whilst aiming to minimise the administrative burden on you as a provider.

The process to become an approved provider with Open Awards is outlined below and you can find out more regarding prices [here](#).

Complete the Provider Recognition Form and the Supplementary Access to HE Approval Forms. To request these forms, please email [enquiries@openawards.org.uk](mailto:enquiries@openawards.org.uk)

One of our team will contact you and discuss your Access to HE plans. We will work together on a plan for maintaining standards.

You will then be able to pay your Provider Recognition and Annual Fee and sign the Open Awards Provider Agreement. Your Provider Approval will be submitted to our Access to HE Committee for their approval.

You will receive continuing support from our dedicated team of experts, which includes training and curriculum development to ensure high-quality processes.

Sometimes we might need to work with you to develop your application before we can give you approval. If this is the case we can offer packages of support to help you meet the required standards. If you are not subject to external inspection from a government agency, for example Ofsted, you will be subject to additional ongoing quality checks.

Your status as an 'approved provider' for Access to HE will be reviewed each year through our external quality assurance and compliance processes to ensure that you continue to meet the high standards that all stakeholders are committed to.

Throughout the provider recognition process we discuss your chosen areas of provision. Once you are approved, we can work with you to finalise Access to HE Diploma(s) for the subject(s) and progression route(s) you are planning. See [How to Build Your Access to HE Diploma Course with Open Awards](#) for more information.



## Provider staffing

All Access to HE providers must comply with our Provider Agreement which includes a commitment to have sufficient financial, administrative and human resources to deliver the Access to HE provision.

Access to HE providers need to nominate appropriate contacts for the following roles so that we can ensure that all information is communicated to the correct person:

<b>Access to HE Coordinator</b>	<p>The role of the Access to HE Coordinator is key to the development and delivery of Access courses. This is usually a senior manager with responsibility for all Access to HE provision at your provider. This person will be the first port of call for curriculum or quality assurance information or queries and will be expected to cascade information to colleagues as necessary. Some administration queries will also be directed to this person.</p> <p>The Access to HE Coordinator should be allowed an appropriate amount of time and support to ensure that the following duties relating to the Access to HE Diploma are carried out:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• acting as the main point of contact for Open Awards</li><li>• cascading Open Awards guidance to appropriate staff at the provider</li><li>• providing information, advice and guidance to current and potential learners</li><li>• attending Open Awards activities (e.g. training and briefings)</li><li>• ensuring colleagues attend appropriate Open Awards events</li><li>• supplying relevant, timely information to Open Awards</li><li>• ensuring that grades are added to the Markbook in a timely manner</li><li>• appointing and training tutors and internal verification staff</li><li>• ensuring compliance with Open Awards policies and procedures</li><li>• overseeing moderation and compliance reviews carried out by Open Awards</li><li>• ensuring that actions are completed in a timely manner</li><li>• publicity and promotion of the Access to HE Diploma</li><li>• organising the Final Awards Board</li></ul> <p>The Access to HE Coordinator need not personally carry out all of these duties but must take responsibility for ensuring they are undertaken.</p>
<b>Senior Manager</b>	<p>Providers need to identify a senior manager with overall responsibility for Access to HE provision, including strategic management of Access to HE provision.</p> <p>Depending on the range of provision offered, there may be more than one manager at the provider. You must ensure that arrangements for delivery, assessment and quality assurance are equitable across the provider.</p>

<b>Tutors/ Assessors</b>	Teaching staff must have the professional competence and skills to teach and assess Access to HE Diplomas, particularly in relation to the models of delivery being used. They must have expertise in the subject matter of the Access to HE Diploma being delivered. Teaching staff must also have expertise in providing pre- and post-course guidance, including the criteria and selection process for progression to HE.
<b>Access to HE Administrator</b>	<p>Open Awards will direct all administration and course-related queries and information to this contact.</p> <p>They will also be included in some of the curriculum correspondence. You may choose to have more than one administrator (usually for additional portal accounts) but you must identify a lead contact. Certificates are always sent to this person and the site where the Access to HE Administrator is based as recorded with Open Awards as the correspondence address. Occasionally, the Access to HE Coordinator and Administrator roles are carried out by the same person.</p> <p>A portal account is allocated to the Access to HE Administrator at your provider. Additional portal accounts can be provided although care should be taken to ensure that control of learner and course information is monitored centrally. Please note that by logging onto the secure portal, you are accepting the terms and conditions of use. These terms and conditions can be found on the log in screen when you input your credentials.</p>
<b>Access to HE Finance Contact</b>	All invoicing and finance queries will be directed to this person.

Please see our [Privacy Notice](#) for details on how we use, store and protect all personal information collected by Open Awards for our legitimate business interests.

## Resources

Open Awards expect that Access to HE delivery is suitably resourced including well-equipped classroom areas with adequate ICT facilities. Learners who need to complete practical work as part of their Diploma must have access to suitably equipped workshop areas relevant to the subject matter. Learners must also have access to high quality learning resources.

Where providers adopt blended or distance learning models of delivery and assessment, the Diploma must be validated for delivery to take place in this way. This information can be found in the Diploma Guides available via Open Awards' website.

You will need to ensure that all learners have access to high quality learning resources that enable them to meet the requirements of the Diploma. The management, storage and distribution of assignments, support materials and learner work must be secure and effective.

The resources available for delivering the Access to HE Diploma will be reviewed through our course recognition and external quality assurance processes.

## Blended and Distance Learning

We are happy to support you to innovate and use technologies to deliver Access to HE Diplomas via methodologies of this type; however, we will require some extra information from you to make sure that your course complies with QAA regulations. Your individual programme must be validated for blended or distance learning before you start delivering via this mode of delivery.

We classify Diplomas where at least 75% of the learning hours are delivered remotely as distance learning. Diplomas with up to 75% of learning hours taking place remotely are classified as blended delivery.

Open Awards has an in-house Online Learning Designer who can provide guidance and support as you develop a blended or distance learning delivery methodology. We also offer 'off the shelf' blended learning materials for a range of units.

These materials are free to use for Open Awards approved providers (dependent on the Learning Management System you require). Open Awards also make blended learning materials available via our own Learning Management System for which there is a nominal charge (please refer to our [pricing information](#) for 2022/2023 prices). Learners must be registered for use of this platform and brief training is provided for tutors to support delivery. To get set up, please contact us on [customerservices@openawards.org.uk](mailto:customerservices@openawards.org.uk) or 0151 494 2072.

Existing providers must note that if the Diploma you are offering is not approved for blended or distance learning, you will need to contact us if you want to change delivery methods. This will be subject to approval from our validation panel and must be approved **before** you start delivery.

## 4. Building your Access to HE Diploma Course

In addition to the information provided in this handbook, please refer to Access to HE Programme Validation Guidance document available via the Portal. This gives you detailed information on completing the Merlin Course Creator Tool and the validation process that Open Awards follows for approving provider courses.

**A recording of how to complete the Merlin Course Creator Tool is available for viewing on our Open Awards E-Learning Portal.**

### How to Build Your Access to HE Diploma Course with Open Awards

Building your Access to HE Diploma is as easy as 1, 2, 3...



**Selecting a Diploma Title:** Firstly, consider what degree course(s) and career pathway(s) you would like to prepare your learners for and select a Diploma title that reflects this from the list of Open Awards Access to HE Diploma titles (available on the Merlin)



**Choosing Content to Meet the Rules of Combination:** Secondly, build your Diploma by choosing modules and units from the Diploma Guide according to the Rules of Combination set out below (and refined with the Diploma Guides). When deciding upon the content you are going to deliver, you need to consider the requirements of the specific Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) to which your learners are most likely to progress.



**Submitting your Course:** Thirdly, submit your planned course to us for review. This will be reviewed by our Access to HE Coordinator and Quality and Standards Advisor to ensure that content meets the Diploma specification; rules of combination; and delivery and assessment requirements.

Where you are planning on delivering a Diploma title for the first time, your course application will be subject to approval from a Validation Panel.

Let's look at these stages in a bit more detail.

## Selecting a Diploma Title

Open Awards set the titles for Access to HE Diplomas through the development process. Titles of Access to HE Diplomas are important as the title must reflect the intended, HE destination for those learners undertaking the Diploma. The titles must conform to a QAA- prescribed format:

Access to HE Diploma (name of subject/area of study/progression route) Examples:

- Access to HE Diploma (Engineering)
- Access to HE Diploma (Humanities)
- Access to HE Diploma (Health Professions)

If you are unable to find a suitable title from our existing titles, new developments can be considered. Contact the team on 0151 494 2072 who will be able to advise on how to do this.

Each Diploma title has a published Diploma Guide. These are available to download via the Open Awards [website](#). The Diploma Guides include all the information you need to know in preparing your course for your chosen title, including the rules of combination; units available for selection; delivery methods; and assessment requirements.

## Rules of Combination

These are the rules which govern the combination of modules and units you are required to use to build your Access to HE Diploma. Specific rules of combination for each Diploma title will be detailed in the relevant Diploma Guide. Some Diplomas will have specific rules of combination in addition to these requirements, including mandatory units or modules.

Our Course Creator Tool (Merlin) and supportive team will help guide you through the process and make sure you follow the correct Rules of Combination. The overarching rules are:

- The units in your Diploma must total 60 credits from units which form a coherent programme of study
- 45 of these credits must be from graded Level 3 units that have academic content
- 15 of these credits must be from ungraded units at Level 2 or Level 3. These units may have academic content or be developmental units.

The three different types of unit mentioned can easily be identified from their unit codes outlined below:

Unit Type	Coding Prefix
Graded Academic	GA
Ungraded Academic	UA
Ungraded Developmental	UD

You can also go to the Open Awards [website](#) and view all of the Access to HE units available using the 'Search Access to HE' tool.

## Using Alternative Modules

You may include a choice of module combinations in your Diploma course where appropriate. For example, for Social Science, you may choose to have both of the following combinations;

- Social Work, Psychology and **Sociology**
- Social Work, Psychology and **Education**

To do this you should submit your Diploma course with interchangeable modules of the same credit value. The Merlin Course Creator Tool will guide you through your selection.

Please note: If you build your Diploma course in this way, Assessors, Internal Verifiers and anyone involved in the registration of learners must be aware of the alternative combinations of units.

## Submitting Your Course for Review

When you have successfully created your Diploma course you will need to submit it for approval via the Open Awards secure portal. This will be reviewed by the Open Awards team. All courses will be presented to the Access to HE Committee and Board of Trustees for final approval. You will be formally notified of the approval outcome including a date for commencement of delivery. This will normally be the date you requested on your Merlin.

**Important:** Once a course has been approved any changes to the course will need to be made using the 'Minor change to course form' available on the Open Awards portal. Please refer to [‘Making changes to your approved courses’](#) section of this handbook for details.

Requests to add new modules, units or Diploma titles should be made to the Open Awards Business Development Manager (Access to HE). Please refer to [Requesting New Modules, Pathways, and Diploma Titles](#) section of this handbook for details.

It is the provider's responsibility to ensure that learners are taught and assessed on the correct units. **If a learner has been taught and assessed for different units to those approved in the course, they may not achieve the Diploma qualification.**

## Course Revalidation

Your course will need to be revalidated at least every five years, and in line with the review date of the Diploma you are delivering. Revalidation of Diplomas, and associated courses, follows a similar process as initial development and ensures that the content remains relevant and appropriate to the intended progression route.

## Access to HE Course Materials and Sample Assignments

In addition to the submission and review of Modules and Units that make up the Open Awards Access to HE Programme, providers are invited to contribute to the provision of sample assignments and course materials.

Course materials are freely available for all Open Awards validated providers via a secure online platform. For further information please contact a member of the team on 0151 494 2072.

## 5. Recruiting and Registering Learners

### Registering Learners

Access to HE learners must be registered within **6 weeks** of the **learner's individual start date** via the Open Awards [Secure Portal](#). Please make sure that learners are registered with the correct details and on the correct Diploma. If learners are registered incorrectly, there will be an administration charge to rectify errors.

All fields within the Access to HE learner registrations form are mandatory. Failure to complete these fields will result in learners not being able to be registered. Video guidance on how to register learners can be found [here](#).

At the point of registration, providers must select the units the learners are going to be assessed against. Where alternative modules/ units are available within an approved course, the specific 60 credits must be selected at the point of registration.

Please note that when the registrations are submitted the system will perform an automatic Rules of Combination (RoC) check to alert you to any issues that may be present with unit registration. Please check that all your learner's have a tick that confirms this. Should you receive an error message, please contact the Customer Service Team at Open Awards for support on [customerservices@openawards.org.uk](mailto:customerservices@openawards.org.uk) or 0151 494 2072.

Providers are also required to select the mode of delivery for the course. Where a course has been validated with more than one mode of delivery, the specific mode of delivery for that cohort of learners must be selected at the point of registration.

Once learners are registered to a course, and the unit combination and mode of delivery has been selected, changes cannot be made unless there are extenuating circumstances.

Amendments or late registrations may be requested up to 26 weeks from the learner's start date but are only considered in extenuating circumstances and on an individual basis. These requests may result in further investigations by Open Awards and control measures may be applied. Please see section on Late or Incorrect Course Registrations [below](#).

Learner data can be submitted using the provided Learner Registration Form (Access to HE) template or via a report generated from your own MIS system. The data provided must be in accordance with the **Access to the HE Data Specification** document which is available via the secure portal.

Wherever possible learners who commence their learning at the same time on a Diploma should be registered to one course run, rather than having numerous course runs for the same Diploma with the same start and end dates.



## Fair Processing and Extended Privacy Notices

We have a responsibility under the Data Protection Act to ensure that learners are informed of how their information is processed and shared. Please ensure you make learners aware that their information will be passed to Open Awards for registration purposes. You should also provide a copy of the [Privacy Notice – Learner Information](#) to your learners so that they understand what data we hold about them, why we hold it and how their data is used.

We strongly recommend that you encourage learners to visit the Learning Record Service [website](#) to view the Extended Text Privacy Notice which will explain how their data may be shared.

Providers must also make learners aware that upon achievement of qualifications and/or units, Open Awards will pass achievement details to the Learning Records Service for the purpose of updating their Personal Learning Record.

## Checking Learner and Course Registrations

You must ensure that learners are registered with their **correct legal** name on the correct Diploma.

Once you have registered your learners, you can use the ‘Course Run Confirmation’ report via the [Secure Portal](#) to check that all information is correct.

We recommend that you use this report whilst registering your learners and throughout the 6-week registering period.

## Late or Incorrect Course Registrations

Learners may be registered late or transferred to another unit or course run between 6 and 26 weeks from the start date but only in exceptional circumstances. The following forms are available on the Secure Portal:

- Request for Late Registration Form
- Request for an Amendment to a Learner Registration

Completed request forms must be submitted via the Secure Portal and will be considered on an individual basis. Requests may be subject to investigation by Open Awards. Repeated errors with registrations will be considered to be malpractice and sanctions will be placed on the provider in line with Open Awards Sanctions Policy.

The Access to HE Late Registration Fee will be applied for late registrations and the Administration Fee will be applied for transfers. See [Pricing Information on our website](#).

## Learners on Two-Year Courses

These learners should be registered on course runs that span the 2-year period rather than as two separate 1-year course runs.

## “Roll on-roll off” provision

Where you offer a “roll on-roll off” provision, learners should be registered to course runs reflecting period of time, i.e. learners who start their course between September and January. Our Customer Service team will work with you to set this up.



## Recognition of Prior Learning and Credit Transfer Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL)

RPL is the generic term for processes used to recognise learning achieved outside the formal course of learning designed to support learner achievement of a named Diploma. It includes recognition of both experiential and certificated learning.

### Level 2 units

Where an Access to HE Diploma includes Level 2 units in maths and English, providers can request blanket exemptions for learners who have previously achieved maths and English GCSE at grade 4 (equivalent to grade C) or above. Similar exemptions may apply for other subject areas.

Blanket exemptions must be requested when the Diploma is initially submitted for approval via the Merlin Course Creator Tool. Upon approval, the blanket exemption means that learners with the relevant level 2 achievement do not need to complete the relevant units. Approval for Level 2 exemptions covers all future learners on the Diploma, although the provider remains responsible for checking and retaining evidence of each learner's achievements where exemptions are claimed.

A maximum of 6 credits may be exempted against any single GCSE. A maximum of 9 credits at Level 2 can be claimed through exemptions.

Where a learner does not have prior achievement to exempt them from a level 2 unit, the provider is responsible for ensuring that the learner is taught and assessed against the content of the unit.

Evidence of prior learning (e.g. copies of named learners' GCSE certificates) must be obtained by the provider and be made available to Open Awards moderators on request.

**Please be aware that exemptions are not allowed on certain Diplomas (please check the Qualification Guide).**

Should a provider wish to claim RPL for a learner that has evidence of prior learning at Level 2 that does not align with the exemptions policy outline above, the guidance for Level 3 below must be followed.

### Level 3 units

Providers wishing to request Recognition of Prior Learning for level 3 achievements must submit a completed Recognition of Prior Learning Request (RPL) Form, via the Secure Portal.

RPL requests for Access to HE learners cannot be submitted for parts of units. If a learner cannot evidence prior achievement of all assessment criteria for a unit, we cannot accept RPL requests. No more than 50% of the credits required for an Access to HE Diploma can be awarded through RPL.

**Please be aware that any units achieved through RPL do not attract grades (and therefore do not have UCAS Tariff points attached to them).**

## Credit Transfer

Learners who have achieved Access to HE Diploma credits (either from Open Awards or another AVA) may wish to claim credit towards an Open Awards Diploma.

Credit transfer can only be granted where the content of the unit/s from which those credits matches the content of the unit/s they wish to claim. If a learner transfers from one named Diploma to another (either within or between AVAs), credits already achieved may be transferred if:

- The credits are derived from units that are equivalent to an Open Awards unit which is acceptable within the rules of combination for the named Diploma to which the learner is transferring.
- There is no more than a maximum of 50% of the units of any Diploma being achieved in this way.
- Equivalent units can only be claimed if achieved within the last 5 years.

## Requesting RPL or Credit Transfer

Requests must be submitted via the [Secure Portal](#), using the Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) request form for each learner as soon they have started the course but no later than 6 weeks from their start date. Forms will be reviewed by the Quality Team along with supporting evidence in line with the Open Awards Recognition of Prior Learning Policy (available via the [Secure Portal](#)).

Providers must continue to deliver the unit(s) to the learner until they receive formal confirmation that the RPL request has been approved.

Where units have been achieved with Open Awards on a previous Access to HE Diploma these credits will automatically transfer.

## Withdrawing Learners

Learners can be withdrawn via the Secure Portal. Learners should be “withdrawn” as soon as this becomes known. This information should not be held to be presented at the Final Awards Board. All registered learners must be accounted for at the FAB, e.g. awarded, withdrawn or continuing.

## 6. Delivering Access to HE Diplomas

### Provider Responsibilities

Providers delivering Access to HE Diplomas must adhere to the requirements of the Open Awards Provider Agreement and the requirements outlined within this handbook at all times. We review your compliance with the relevant terms and conditions in line with QAA requirements through annual compliance review activities (see [Annual Compliance Review](#)) and may seek additional clarification throughout the year.

Please note that the [Provider staffing and resources](#) requirements outlined in the provider validation section of this handbook continue to apply to all providers delivering Access to HE Diplomas at all times.

If you become aware at any point that you are not meeting the requirements of the Provider Agreement or the requirements of this handbook you must contact us immediately.

### Open Awards Responsibilities

- We will allocate a named Quality and Standards Advisor (QASA) to work with you.
- We will respond to all enquiries promptly and supportively.
- We will publish clear and accurate information and guidance regarding our requirements, in a timely manner.
- We will work with providers to ensure the currency and validity of their Access to HE Diplomas.
- We support provider staff delivering Access to HE provision through briefings, training and standardisation opportunities.
- We will communicate any changes to QAA and Open Awards systems and requirements promptly and clearly, giving further support as necessary.
- We will strive to raise the profile of the Access to HE Diploma nationally and to work collaboratively with QAA, higher education institutions and provider partners to secure progression routes for learners.
- We will strive to keep bureaucracy to an absolute minimum, whilst still meeting QAA regulatory requirements and ensuring the integrity of the Access to HE Diploma.
- We will protect the interests of learners and ensure they are at the heart of what we do.

### Teaching Arrangements

Staff teaching on the Access to HE Diploma must have the professional competence and skills to teach and assess necessary for the mode(s) of delivery to be used, and the level of subject expertise necessary to teach and assess the units available on the Diploma(s) it is approved to offer.

It is not permissible for providers to request adaptations to the method of delivery, units delivered or assessment tasks in response to the pandemic on or after 1 August 2022. Providers may wish to incorporate some adaptations, or elements of adaptations, used during the pandemic into the Diplomas they will be delivering in future. In this case, providers should work with to ensure any changes or modifications to existing Diplomas follow relevant procedures.

Access to HE Diplomas must follow the validated rules of combination and be delivered and assessed in accordance with the method and schedule for which a provider has been approved. This means that insofar as possible learners should be assessed in accordance with the information provided to them upon enrolment.

## Support Arrangements

### Extensions to assignment deadlines

You can approve extensions to assignment deadlines in line with QAA requirements and the requirements outlined within this document. Extensions can be agreed for a whole group or individual learners; for single or multiple assignments depending on the circumstances. All agreed extensions should be recorded and subject to review during external quality assurance.

Providers should be mindful of the potential implications for learners when offering multiple extensions across the Diploma, to avoid placing unnecessary pressure on students at the end of their course. You should also consider the impact of managing extensions on staff workloads, for example, marking and quality assurance. It may be possible to offer alternative solutions in these cases and providers should speak to your QASA to discuss.

### Additional study support where there are extenuating circumstances

You may provide additional study support and other forms of additional support where the need is evident. Additional support must be recorded and is subject to review by SSMS to ensure:

- it is necessary and appropriate
- it does not undermine the validity and reliability of the qualification
- it considers and addresses risks around malpractice

In addition, any issues identified by learners and / or providers that impact the learner's academic performance (or ability to complete the Diploma) should be recorded and made available for review by SSMS.

### Counselling support

Many providers will be able to provide counselling support and other forms of additional support for students with mental health issues, where the need is identified. This may support the student to manage the challenges rather than withdraw or defer a year.

### Breaks in learning or extensions to learning

Providers can agree breaks in learning for students, which allow for a gap of up to six months without affecting funding or loan restrictions. This can enable a student to have a break or study for a longer period, with an extended end date. Breaks in learning and extensions should be recorded and confirmed to your QASA.

### Students in England

Follow this link to the [ESFA guidance](#).

Information about breaks in learning in relation to [advanced learner loans](#).

### Students in Wales

Follow this link to guidance on [breaks \(suspension\) in learning](#)

### Non-publicly funded courses

For non-publicly funded courses, providers can agree breaks with students in accordance with their own policies. Please speak to your AVA regarding any such breaks in learning.

### Continuing into the next academic year

Providers may offer students the option of continuing into the next academic year. Students have up to five years to complete their Diploma. This should be discussed with Open Awards and any agreed continuing students will be recorded at the Final Awards Board.

Students registered on Open Awards Access to HE Diplomas can take up to three years before they need to be re-registered. Please contact your QASA for more information.

## Learner Registration and Achievement Data Reporting

Education and Skills Funding Agency and QAA work with Open Awards and other Access Validating Agencies to review registration and achievement data each year, so we are required to undertake extensive data analysis. Whilst this data is normally reviewed through the annual and mid-year compliance reviews, we may contact you from time to time to request information or updates.

Please ensure that learner data is accurate and complete and that we have the correct contact details for the most appropriate person for us to liaise with over data.

To ensure grades are fair, equitable and robust, once sufficient unit grades have been added to the Markbook to allow for meaningful analysis, Open Awards will undertake a monthly review of grading data in-year to identify any potential issues. Where a provider has delivered the same Diploma in previous years, the emerging grade profile will be reviewed against data from the last few academic years.

## Training for providers

In addition to 1-2-1 support through our team, we offer training and support throughout the year for staff delivering Access to HE Diplomas including:

- Administration, registration and certification
- Access to HE Coordinator Forum
- Access to HE Standardisation Events
- Access to HE Teacher Network and Collaboration Forum
- Access to HE Diploma Development Groups
- Preparing for Annual Compliance; Mid-year Compliance; and Final Awards Boards
- Overview of the moderation cycle
- Award through extenuation
- Assessment planning
- Assignment writing
- Grading and Feedback
- Bespoke sessions for providers on particular themes (fees may apply)

Events will take place online unless otherwise stated. Details of upcoming events can be viewed on our website [here](#).

## Learner Awards

As we have done for many years, this year Open Awards will be supporting the Keith Fletcher Access to HE Memorial Prizes for learners on courses during the last academic year.

The ceremony is a prestigious event and usually takes place at the Palace of Westminster. All Access Award winners and runners up also receive acknowledgement from QAA at their national conference each year.

Our providers have done us proud in recent years, with learners from Tameside College and Wirral Met College runners up in 2020-21 (read all about it [here](#)) and a learner from Bury College winning the award for achievement in 2019-20 (read all about it [here](#)).

We encourage nominations for the prize from all our Access to HE providers. This is a great opportunity for you to get the work of your exceptional learners recognised on a national platform. We will contact Access to HE Coordinators directly. All nominations should be sent to us by late October.

## 7. Assessing Access to HE Diplomas

### Rules of Combination to Achieve the Access to HE Diploma

All Access to HE Diplomas must comply with criteria set by QAA. To achieve the Diploma, learners must complete a programme of units in relevant subject areas to prepare them for their intended Higher Education progression route. For each unit successfully completed learners are awarded credits which gradually build towards the 60 credits required for the Access to HE Diploma.

Graded units (level 3)	Ungraded (level 2 or level 3)	Total credits
45	15	60

The content of the academic units must be directly related to the diploma title/intended progression route. The ungraded units are intended to develop skills and knowledge, which will support the study of the level 3 graded units.

Each unit is made up of a specific number of learning outcomes and assessment criteria with a specified level and credit value.

The unit details what the learner should know, understand or be able to do after a specific period of learning. To achieve the unit, learners must provide evidence for each of the learning outcomes and assessment criteria. There is no award of credit for partial achievement of a unit.

Each unit will have at least three of the following grade descriptors attached. The grade descriptors allocated relate to the skills, knowledge and/ or understanding that need to be considered when making grading decisions of learner performance. Every unit has Grade descriptor 7 attached.

All grade descriptors assigned to a unit must be used in the grading of the unit whenever it is delivered. Descriptors that have not been formally assigned to the unit must not be used.

Grade descriptor	
1	Understanding of the subject
2	Application of knowledge
3	Application of skills
4	Use of Information
5	Communication and presentation
6	Autonomy and/or Independence
7	Quality

More details on the QAA Grading Scheme for Access to HE Diplomas can be found via the following links. Providers are strongly encouraged to ensure their staff are aware of these regulations and how they relate to their role.

- [Access Grading Scheme Handbook Index](#)
- [Access Grading Scheme Section - A Introduction and Summary](#)
- [Access Grading Scheme - Section B The Grade Descriptors](#)
- [Access Grading Scheme - Section C Using the Grade Descriptors in Assessment](#)
- [Access Grading Scheme - Section D Moderation and Standardisation](#)
- [Access Grading Scheme - Section E Student Results and Awards Boards](#)
- [Access to HE Diploma Grading Process Flowchart](#)

## Diploma Assessment Strategy

Assessment is the consideration of evidence in order to make a judgement about what learning has taken place and the standard of learner achievement.

Each Access to HE Diploma must be supported by an assessment strategy which details the principles underpinning how the assessment will be undertaken for each Diploma in a fair and equitable manner.

By developing an assessment strategy at the outset, the provider can ensure that a range of appropriate assessment methods are selected to allow learners to demonstrate achievement. Consideration must be given to consider the needs of all learners whilst also making sure that they can develop and evidence the skills, knowledge and confidence that will prepare them for the rigorous assessment regimes in higher education.

The demands of assessment should be increased incrementally, as learners develop new skills and become more familiar with the assessment process.

The assessment strategy should cover the whole Diploma and include:

- Number of assignments
- Type and range of assessments
- How tasks will allow for differentiation
- An assessment strategy for the whole Diploma
- A schedule of delivery and assessment/ scheme of work
- Consideration as to whether the strategy prepares learners for HE

The assessment strategy for each Diploma must be carefully planned and fully explained so that all learners are aware of what is expected of them to achieve the qualification and units for which they are registered. It should ensure that assessment methods:

- are appropriate for the units being delivered
- are consistent with the skills required for study in HE
- are manageable and offer comparable demand to units of the same size within this Diploma, and across other Diplomas

Open Awards will review assessment plans for each Diploma being delivered, including IQA arrangements, as part of our [Annual Compliance Review](#).

## Unit Assessment Plans

Assessments for each unit should be planned by the tutor responsible for teaching and assessing the unit. Tutors must develop plans which show how they intend to assess the unit, and these plans must be internally quality assured before the unit is delivered.

The completion of unit assessment plans will enable the learning outcomes, assessment criteria and grade descriptor components to be identified for each assignment, in addition to a brief description of the assessment methods and tasks.

Where a unit is assessed by more than one assignment, the unit assessment plan must clearly state which grade descriptors will be considered for each assignment and how you will apply a single grade for the unit. The assessment methods, tasks and the evidence to be produced by a learner should be determined by the level of the unit.

If more than one assignment is used to assess a unit, the unit assessment plan must show how the learning outcomes and grade descriptors are allocated across the assignments.



## Learning Outcomes and Assessment Criteria

Tutors must provide learners with an assignment brief for each assignment, which explains what they have to do to achieve the learning outcomes and assessment criteria and how the work will be assessed.

It is important to note that each learning outcome and assessment criteria should only be assessed once.

When more than one assignment is used to assess a unit, each assignment must be used to assess different learning outcomes or groups of learning outcomes.

When writing the tasks for the assignment brief, each task should be linked to the relevant learning outcome(s) and assessment criteria. It should always be clear to the learner what they are aiming to achieve in any task.

## Grade Descriptors

The grade descriptors for use with each unit are listed on the unit specification. All grade descriptors assigned to a unit must be used in the grading of the unit whenever it is delivered. Descriptors that have not been formally assigned to the unit must not be used.

Each grade descriptor includes a list of components that can be selected by the tutor for making grading judgements. The selection of grade descriptor components is crucial to effective grading, ensuring that the resulting grades reflect the standard of work expected at Merit and Distinction in relation to the assessment criteria and the requirements of the assignment.

Tutors must also ensure that the number of grade descriptor components is fair and appropriate. For example, in grade descriptor 1, tutors may choose “one or more” of the components. Choose one, and it may be “grasp of the relevant knowledge base”; choose two and it may also be “informed by the major conventions and practices of the area of study”; choose three and “understanding of the different perspectives or approaches associated with the area of study” must also be added. If all three are chosen, the grading judgement will have to take all three into account. The learner will have to attempt to address all three in order to achieve Merit or Distinction grades.

In assessing a unit through more than one assignment, providers should be aware that grade descriptor 7 (Quality) must be used for each assignment, as well as at least one more grade descriptor appropriate to the assignment.

Each grade descriptor may be used more than once if you consider this necessary to give a more valid overall grade for the unit. The grade descriptor components chosen for each assignment may vary between assignment.

Care must be given to ensure that the most appropriate grade descriptor components are selected for the assessment method. For example, if the assignment requires one-word answers or short phrases, grade descriptor 7a (The learner’s work is structured in a way that is consistently logical and fluent) would not be appropriate.



## Preparing Your Assignments

One of the many benefits of an Open Awards Access to HE Diploma is that you design the assignments yourself to suit the context of delivery and to make the most of the variety of assessments methods available to you. Here are a few principles to consider when designing your assignments:

### 1 Transparency

- The Learning Outcomes and associated Assessment Criteria for a unit should be made available to the learner
- The requirements of the assessment should be expressed clearly in relation to the Assessment Criteria
- The specific grade descriptor components used to grade learners' work must be published together with the assignment brief

### 2 Fairness

- Assignments must be written in a style and using language that makes them as accessible as possible to all learners
- The skills required to complete an assessment must relate to the subject and topics being assessed

### 3 Reliability

- An assessment strategy may be considered to be reliable if, when used with different groups of learners, it produces similar outcomes in terms of successful completion as well as in terms of the range of grades achieved

### 4 Validity

- The outcomes of assessment may be considered to be valid if:
  - the evidence of assessment can be attributed to a specific learner
  - the assessor is able to justify achievement and recommended grades against the specific criteria for the unit

### 5 Sufficiency

- The evidence of assessment should be sufficient to allow an assessor to make a judgement that a learner has achieved all the learning outcomes for a unit and
- The evidence of assessment should be sufficient to allow an assessor to justify any recommended grades
- There must be evidence that the learner has fully met all of the assessment criteria and the evidence should be balanced and reflect the demands of the criteria.

## 6 Authenticity

- At least one assessment from each module in a Diploma must be observed.
- Ensure that you collect learner statements and signatures (Assignment Brief)
- Encourage the use of referencing and bibliographies
- Discourage “passive recycling of sources”

## 7 Delivery and Assessment

- Operate a formal approach to the submission of learner work
- Set deadlines must be notified to learners in writing (Assignment Brief)
- **At least one unit for each module should have some element of supervised assessment**
- Work is assessed against the specific assessment criteria for the Unit
- A learner’s submission is successful if they have achieved all the Learning Outcomes attached to an assignment by meeting all the associated assessment criteria
- Each assessment criteria can/should be formally assessed only once
- Grades are assigned by reference to common grade descriptor components
- Only the components published by the QAA may be used
- Draft submissions are allowed; however, no indication of grade can be discussed with the learner. You can discuss whether or not assessment criteria have been met

## 8 Identify Areas of Improvement Through Evaluation and Standardisation

- Assessments and units should be reviewed taking account of achievement data, suitability and learner and tutor feedback.
- Consider Moderator feedback
- Ensure that you have an internal standardisation policy
- Ensure that your internal standardisation schedule is appropriate and aligns with the policy
- Take part in Open Awards subject development groups
- Contribute to Open Awards unit reviews

Further information and guidance on unit assessments can be found in the Grading Scheme Handbook on the QAA Access to HE [website](#).

## Assessment arrangements

Staff teaching on the Access to HE Diploma must have the professional competence and skills to teach and assess necessary for the mode(s) of delivery to be used, and the level of subject expertise necessary to teach and assess the units available on the Diploma(s) it is approved to offer.

It is not permissible for providers to request adaptations to the method of delivery, units delivered or assessment tasks in response to the pandemic on or after 1 August 2022. Providers may wish to incorporate some adaptations, or elements of adaptations, used during the pandemic into the Diplomas they will be delivering in future. In this case, providers should work with to ensure any changes or modifications to existing Diplomas follow relevant procedures.

Access to HE Diplomas must follow the validated rules of combination and be delivered and assessed in accordance with the method and schedule for which a provider has been approved. This means that insofar as possible learners should be assessed in accordance with the information provided to them upon enrolment.

## Assessment submission requirements

It is a requirement that you publish procedures for the formal submission of work for assessment in your course handbook. This must be communicated to learners. These procedures must be the same for all the Access Diplomas that you are approved to deliver.

Your procedures must conform to QAA requirements set out in:

- [QAA Grading Scheme Handbook, Section C](#)
- [QAA Grading Scheme Handbook, Section E](#)

### Draft submissions

Opportunities to submit assignments in draft for comment and feedback by tutors before the formal submission date are permitted only when this has been specified in advance by the tutor. Such opportunities should not be the norm. Assignment briefs must clearly state whether draft submissions are allowed and where they are, the arrangements that must be followed.

Tutors can discuss whether or not assessment criteria have been met but cannot give an indication of grade or make detailed corrections to a draft submission. Providers are expected to follow an internal policy for managing draft assignments which must be consistently applied by all tutors and ensure fairness for learners.

### Formal submissions

Providers must set deadlines for all work to be submitted for formal assessment and notify these to learners in writing before the assignment is undertaken. The course handbook should clearly state your expectations of the format in which submissions should be made. Once a formal submission has been made, this cannot later be declared to be a draft.

### Resubmissions

If a learner hands work in on time, but has not demonstrated achievement of all assessment criteria, the provider can set a second deadline to allow the learner to cover the missing criteria only. The first submission should not be graded and no indication of grade must be given, but returned to the learner with guidance as to what needs to be resubmitted.

Resubmissions must:

- be proportionate to the degree of non-achievement

- be consistent with the way the learning outcome(s) were originally assessed
- be subject to a clear deadline
- be applied consistently in equivalent assessment situations, so that all learners have equivalent opportunities for resubmission and reassessment
- ensure that the additional or revised work being resubmitted is clearly distinguishable from the work originally submitted
- be subject to moderation

Completed resubmissions can be awarded a grade if handed in by the set resubmission deadline.

A learner with a legitimate extension may also resubmit work, although resubmission dates may need to be extended as a result of the initial authorised late submission.

### **Late Submissions**

If a learner hands work in late without a good reason, it can be marked against the learning outcomes and assessment criteria but will **be capped at a pass**. Late submissions include:

- Work handed in later than the first submission deadline without an agreed extension
- Work handed in after an agreed extension date
- Work handed in later than a resubmission deadline
- Incomplete work (if you have a clear policy relating to this eventuality)

If a late submission does not meet the learning outcomes there is no opportunity for resubmission except via the [referrals process](#).

### **Extensions**

Requests for extensions can only be made due to extenuating circumstances and must be made in writing. Providers need to submit these requests to Open Awards for consideration as soon as possible with a deadline of the day before the final moderation. Requests for extensions must be accompanied by supporting evidence. Decisions will be confirmed either in writing or on the date of the Final Awards Board.

Any requests that are not approved by the deadline should be discussed with the Subject Specialist Moderator at the final pathway quality review meeting.

**Please note:** Any units that the learners managed to achieve will be reviewed by the Subject Specialist Moderator as normal. Learners with approved extensions will not have any awards certificated until the provider has submitted the final results.

### **Referrals**

When a learner has not achieved all the assessment criteria for a unit following either of the scenarios below and due to special circumstances, a referral may be possible:

- if the first submission was late and failed to address all assessment criteria,
- If resubmitted work failed to address all of the assessment criteria

Referrals are not an automatic right and cannot be granted by the provider.

The Access to HE Coordinator must submit a Learner Referral Request Form (On Course) to Open Awards requesting that a learner be permitted a second resubmission during the course. The form can be found via the Secure Portal and must be submitted along with supporting information. Open Awards' decision is final in referral cases.

If there is insufficient time before the end of a course run, a referral request may be made to the Final Awards Board via a Learner Referral Request Form (FAB). The FAB will review all evidence presented to decide whether a further opportunity for resubmission should be allowed. Where agreed, the FAB will outline specific requirements of the resubmission.

The deadline date for a referred resubmission will be agreed between Open Awards and the provider. Additional work must be Internally Quality Assured and made available for external Subject Specialist Moderation.

Grade indicators for the referred resubmission are capped at pass; these pass grade indicators are added to the unit grade profile, and the unit grade is calculated in the usual way. If the resubmitted assignment represents the totality of evidence of achievement for the 16 unit, the unit grade will therefore be pass. Where the assignment represents part of the evidence for achievement on the unit, the final unit grade will depend on other grade indicators within the unit grade profile.

If work resubmitted after referral has been agreed does not demonstrate that the learner has achieved the learning outcome(s), no credits or grades for the unit can be awarded.

### **Representations**

Representations apply when a learner is not satisfied with a tutor's explanation for unconfirmed grade indicators awarded and asks for them to be formally reconsidered. The learner should make a formal application for the representation, giving reasons. These are reviewed in turn by the assessor and then the internal quality assurer before a decision is made.

### **Agreeing Unit Grades**

When assessing learner work, tutors must first consider whether the assignment submitted by the learner has achieved all the learning outcomes that were specified for the assignment. If all the learning outcomes have been achieved, the assignment is regarded as a successful submission and is graded.

Tutors must then consider a learner's work in relation to the grade descriptor components chosen for the assignment. The tutor must decide, for each of the descriptors that have been identified for the assessment of the assignment whether the standard of a learner's performance is better described by the chosen distinction (D) or merit (M) components, or whether the work does not reach the standard described by the chosen merit component(s) and is at pass (P) standard.

A grade indicator is given for each grade descriptor used to assess that assignment. Grade indicators can only be P, M or D: no intermediate or modified grade indicators can be given.

Where more than one assignment is used to assess a unit, the process is the same for each assignment. Tutors must record the decisions made as a set of grade indicators for each descriptor used for an assignment. Together, these indicators create the unit grade profile.

The grade for a unit is based on the overall profile of grades achieved across the unit. All of the grade indicators have equal value in the unit grade profile and all are considered in determining the unit grade.

The final grade for the unit is arrived at by establishing the midpoint of grades in the unit grade profile. This midpoint is apparent when all grade indicators recorded in the unit grade profile are recorded in sequence from lowest to highest (for example, PPM or PPPD indicates a pass grade for the unit; MDD or MDDD indicates a distinction).

Where the midpoint is unclear (for example, if the grade profile is evenly split between two different grades, such as PPMM) the tutor must make a professional judgement about the overall standard of the assessed work for the unit, with particular attention given to grade descriptor 7 (Quality), as a guide to which grade better represents overall performance in the unit.

Final grades must not be determined by giving grades for individual assignments and then calculating an overall grade from assignment grades.

Examples of unit grade profiles are shown below:

Unit title		
Grade descriptors		Grade indicator
1	Understanding of the subject	M
2	Application of knowledge	
3	Application of skills	
4	Use of Information	
5	Communication and presentation	P
6	Autonomy and/or Independence	
7	Quality	M
Unit grade profile		PMM
Unit grade		Merit

Unit title		
Grade descriptors		Grade indicator
1	Understanding of the subject	
2	Application of knowledge	D
3	Application of skills	
4	Use of Information	M
5	Communication and presentation	M
6	Autonomy and/or Independence	
7	Quality	D
Unit grade profile		MMDD
Unit grade (noting quality grade)		Distinction

Unit title			
		Unit coverage	
		Assign. 1	Assign. 2
Grade descriptors			
1	Understanding of the subject	M	P
2	Application of knowledge		
3	Application of skills	P	P
4	Use of Information		
5	Communication and presentation	P	M
6	Autonomy and/or Independence		
7	Quality	P	P
Unit grade profile		PPPPPPMM	
Unit grade		Pass	

## Feedback to the Learner

Tutors must provide feedback to learners for each submitted assignment in a timely manner. Ideally the assignment brief should provide the learner with an indication of when they can expect to receive this feedback. All feedback provided should be sufficient, focused and developmental. It should provide justification for the grade(s) recommended.

For **ungraded units**, feedback should be made against the assessment criteria relating to the assignment. No reference should be made to grade descriptors as they do not apply to.

For **graded units**, feedback must be relevant to, and consistent with, the requirements of the learning outcomes, grade descriptors and components used for the assignment.

Tutors must ensure that feedback is consistent with the standard represented by the chosen grade descriptors, and only refer to aspects of performance covered by the assignment or the grade descriptors and components that were applied.

Where more than one assignment is used to assess a unit, tutors should provide feedback in relation to the individual assignments so that learners can identify strengths and weaknesses in different areas and improve their performance.

Feedback on work which has not met the requirements of one or more learning outcomes, and therefore has not achieved the standard for Pass, must only confirm which aspect of a learning outcome has not been achieved. It must not provide information which relates to grading.

Feedback should follow the guidance provided on the Assignment Brief and Feedback sheet and tutors should include specific examples where the learner's work provides evidence for the recommended grade

Feedback should be developmental and constructive – allowing learners to understand how to achieve a higher grade in subsequent assignments. Care must be taken to avoid providing feedback that is so detailed that it could be deemed to be coaching.

## 8. Changes and Adaptations

### Making Changes to your Approved Courses

Once your Access to HE Diploma course has been approved it can only be amended through a formal change process (except where adaptations due to Covid-19 apply (see below). Changes must be requested **before** learners are registered on the course.

Should you need to make a change to your course please use the 'Minor Change Form' which is available on the Open Awards secure portal.

Any other changes will require a new course submission using the Course Creator Tool (Merlin).

Change Type	Change Description	Action Required
Minor Change	A change of up to 15 credits selected from an existing module within a validated Diploma as long as Open Awards consider that the change will not detract from the coherence of the Diploma, its suitability for the stated progression route, and the rules of combination are still met.	Minor Change Form to be completed and submitted through the Secure Portal.
Minor Change	Addition of an alternative module to an existing validated Diploma, as long as this has the same credit value as the original module, and the alternative module is comparable in demand to its alternative. It must also align to the content and rationale of the Diploma.	
Major Change	Change to Diploma title using an existing Open Awards' QAA approved title that aligns to the content and rationale of the Diploma.	To be classed as a new Diploma course.  Course Creator Tool (Merlin) to be completed and submitted through the Secure Portal.
Major Change	A change to an existing approved Diploma course involving 16 credits or more.	
Major Change	A replacement of one or more modules by another from the same pathway.	
Major Change	A change to the mode(s) of delivery.	

Other requested changes may also be considered and we will use our discretion as to the process to be followed to approve any change.



## Making Minor Changes

You should submit minor change requests through the Secure Portal using the Minor Change Request Form.

The request will be assessed against the original course request. Where all criteria are met, the change will be approved for all future registrations on the Diploma. Minor changes will be processed and notification will be emailed to the Access to HE Coordinator who will be asked to check and confirm the changes.

**For changes to be processed in time for the next academic year, minor change requests must be received by 31<sup>st</sup> July at the latest.**

## Making Major Changes

If you wish to make a major change, you will need to request and submit a new Diploma course on a Merlin form through the Secure Portal. These changes will be processed in the same way as new Diploma courses and must be submitted **no later than 31<sup>st</sup> May** each year.

## Requesting Changes to Pathways, Modules and Units

Open Awards is keen to ensure that all of its qualifications are valid and fit for purpose. We welcome suggestions from any stakeholders for any proposed changes to the structure and content of Pathways, Modules and Units.

## Requesting Textual Changes to Units

You can make suggestions for textual changes to unit content to Open Awards Business Development Manager (Access to HE) who will review them with you and then submit them to the Access to HE Committee and Board of Trustees for approval if appropriate.

Each unit has a shelf life of up to five years before a review is scheduled. Depending on the context of the changes proposed, we may take immediate action to amend the unit or wait until the next scheduled review of the unit.

## Requesting New Units, Modules, Pathways, and Diploma Titles

We welcome business cases for the proposal of new units, modules, pathways and titles, which can be submitted to the Access to HE Manager for review by the Open Awards Access to HE Committee and Board of Trustees for approval. As changes to the programme structure may impact on some or all users of the Diploma, we will ensure that all relevant stakeholders are involved in the consultation process before any change is agreed and implemented. Changes should not be implemented in your diploma course until you have written confirmation that the changes have been approved and you have requested the change to or a new Diploma.

All Open Awards Access to HE units are valid for a maximum period of 5 years. Open Awards conduct reviews of a selection of units across the academic year to ensure that they remain fit for purpose.

Providers are invited to comment on the suitability of units as part of the review process before they are taken to panel for renewal.

## Adaptations to Delivery, Assessments and/or Units

It is not permissible for providers to request adaptations to the method of delivery, units delivered or assessment tasks in response to the pandemic on or after 1 August 2022. Providers may wish to incorporate some adaptations, or elements of adaptations, used during the pandemic into the Diplomas they will be delivering in future. In this case, providers should work with to ensure any changes or modifications to existing Diplomas follow relevant procedures.

Access to HE Diplomas must follow the validated rules of combination and be delivered and assessed in accordance with the method and schedule for which a provider has been approved. This means that insofar as possible learners should be assessed in accordance with the information provided to them upon enrolment.

For continuing learners, (registered on their course before 1 August 2022 and continuing in academic year 22-23, and any learners who took a break in learning and are returning to their course from 1 August 2022), it is not possible for new adaptations to delivery, units delivered or assessment tasks in response to the pandemic on or after 1 August 2022.

However, arrangements relating to the **principles of quality assurance** under the ERF **will apply** where:

- adaptations to the method of delivery, units delivered or assessment tasks on the Diploma in response to the pandemic have been approved and commenced **prior to 1 August 2022**, and/or
- students (and/or providers) have experienced extenuating circumstances due to the pandemic, **prior to 1 August 2022**.

## 9. Internal Quality Assurance

Access to HE providers must have a clear policy and procedure for the internal quality assurance of assessment practice. Internal quality assurance is a process by which the provider systematically samples and evaluates its assessment practices and decisions, and acts on the findings to ensure consistency and fairness. The main purpose is to improve and standardise practice in the assessment of learners.

Arrangements relating to the principles of quality assurance under the Extraordinary Regulatory Framework will only apply to continuing students where:

- there have been adaptations to the method of delivery, units delivered or assessment tasks on their Diploma in response to the pandemic, which have been approved and commenced prior to 1 August 2022, and/or
- the student has experienced extenuating circumstances due to the pandemic, prior to 1<sup>st</sup> August 2022.

A continuing student is defined as a student who was registered on their course before 1 August 2022 and will continue with their studies into the following academic year (1 August 2022 - 31 July 2023). This will also include any students who took a break in learning and are returning to their course from 1 August 2022.

## What is Internal Quality Assurance?

Internal quality assurance is comprised of:

- IQA of diploma assessment plans
- IQA of unit assessment plans
- IQA of assignment briefs
- IQA of learners' assessed work
- Internal standardisation
- End of course checks

The process must demonstrate, through tracking and record keeping, that learners have achieved the correct combination of units and any additional requirements in order to achieve the Access to HE Diploma. The IQA plan must be made available to Open Awards for external moderation purposes.

Internal Quality Assurers cannot review their own assessment plans, briefs or work of their own learners. The Access to HE Coordinator must take responsibility for internal quality assurance of all Access to HE Diplomas at your organisation and we will expect that you have the appropriate levels of resources to implement these processes.

As well as the relevant knowledge to understand the Access to HE specification and the QAA grading scheme, Internal Quality Assurers will also be expected to have relevant subject expertise at an appropriate level.

Through their programme of IQA activities, they will recognise and promote best practice and identify where there are concerns that require action. Feedback to assessors is important to help improve and standardise assessment practices. Action plans can include reference to the sharing of best practice which should be shared through the scheduled meetings of the course team and internal standardisation, or areas for improvement.

## IQA of the Diploma Assessment Plan

Diploma assessment plans developed by course leaders must be reviewed before delivery begins to ensure that:

- planned delivery meets the required rules of combination and the unit specifications
- assessments are scheduled across the delivery period to ensure a reasonable spread of hand in dates for learners and assessors
- the volume and demand of assessments is equitable across units (taking account of relevant credit values)
- a suitable variety of assessment methods have been selected
- learner feedback from previous cohorts has been considered where appropriate

The IQA must take responsibility to ensure that actions are discussed with assessors and the course leader and implemented in a timely manner. Appropriate changes must be signed off by the IQA.

All IV and standardisation activities should be planned and documented. It is important that you schedule all activities in advance so that this becomes an ongoing activity which allows for changes to be made to assessment practices in year if required. The plan should also outline the systems that are in place for to elicit and respond to learner evaluation and feedback on the assessment process. Feedback should be used to bring about continuous improvement.

## **IQA of Unit Assessment Plans**

Unit assessment plans must be reviewed by the internal quality assurer to ensure that:

- the unit assessment plan aligns with the overall diploma assessment plan.
- it is appropriate for the learners' development of the learners' learning, and is inclusive
- all learning outcomes and assessment criteria for each unit are covered
- for graded units, the grade descriptors attached to the individual units are the only ones included in the plan
- appropriate grade descriptor components have been chosen
- the level and volume of assessment is appropriate to the unit level and size
- a suitable variety of assessment methods have been chosen

The IQA must take responsibility to ensure that actions are discussed with assessors and the course leader and implemented in a timely manner. Appropriate changes must be signed off by the IQA before the unit is delivered.

## **IQA of Assignment Briefs**

Alongside the review of the unit assessment plan, the IQA must also review the assignment briefs before they are issued to learners to ensure that each brief contains:

- correct unit title and code
- the learning outcomes and assessment criteria covered by the assignment
- valid assessment methods and tasks to meet the learning outcomes and assessment criteria
- assessment tasks that are fit for purpose for the level of the unit
- sufficient information for learners to understand the assessment tasks
- word counts or range (clearly explained) if appropriate
- referencing and bibliography requirements if appropriate
- draft guidance if drafts are allowed for the assignment
- dates for circulation to learners and deadlines for submission
- accurate information about the grade descriptors for the assignment
- choices of grade descriptor components which are suitable for the nature of the assessment tasks
- the same grade descriptor components for merit and distinction grades
- sufficient information on how to achieve Merit or Distinction grades for each grade descriptor

Internal quality assurers must identify and record actions required for each assignment brief. The IQA must sign off these actions as complete before the assignment brief can be shared with learners.

## **IQA of Learners' Assessed Work**

Evidence presented by learners to demonstrate unit achievement must be assessed (and graded where appropriate) in accordance with QAA regulations.

A plan for the IQA of learners' work must be developed in conjunction with the overall assessment strategy for the Diploma and indicate what will happen, when and with whom. IQA should be ongoing throughout the year to ensure that the evidence for each unit is reviewed as soon as is practicable after assessment has taken place.

This will ensure that any problems involving the practice of a particular assessor are highlighted as soon as possible in order to give sufficient time to take any remedial action before the assessor formally assesses other subsequent units.

It is not necessary to review the work of every learner for every unit so the IQA should devise an appropriate sampling plan that aligns with your organisation's IQA policies. The sample selected must:

- be a fair reflection of the number and size of groups assessed
- be a fair reflection of the range of grades awarded
- include units where there is no clear mid-point grade, where appropriate
- include 'borderline cases' where similar profiles result in different aggregated grades, e.g. PPMMM and PPPMM
- be a fair reflection of the demographic features of learners (e.g. gender, ethnic background, age and disability status)
- include various modes of delivery, where appropriate
- take account of each assessor's experience and track record
- include units being assessed for the first time or through new assignments
- allow the IQA to review process on actions identified in previous reports
- take account of the need to ensure that every unit be sampled over the delivery cycle of a Diploma
- be selected by the IQA – not the tutor.

For each sample the IQA will require the following documentation:

- The unit assessment plan
- The assignment brief
- The selected learners' completed work – including the assessor's annotations
- Feedback from the assessor to the learner
- Indicative grades (for graded units)
- for resubmissions - both pieces of work and evidence supporting the resubmission
- Draft submissions (where allowed)

It is the IQA's responsibility to consider all available evidence and make judgements about:

- accuracy of paperwork completion
- achievement of learning outcomes and assessment criteria at the correct level
- indicative grades awarded (for graded units)
- the type and quality of feedback given to the learner which may include:
  - clarity of explanation about the relevance of the work
  - suitability of language used
  - relationship to assessment criteria
  - relationship to grade descriptor components (for graded units)
  - guidance on future development of work

The IQA will record their findings which must include clear, accurate, supportive and developmental advice and feedback to the assessor, setting actions accordingly. IQA feedback should not be a simple agreement or second marking.

Where necessary, the IQA may change the assessors' decision – following discussion. If the decision is taken to alter assessment decisions or indicative grades, the feedback form for the learner should be clearly updated and signed. The relevant tracking records, including IQA records, must also be updated.

## Internal Standardisation

Standardisation is a vital component of any robust quality assurance system and as a condition of provider approval all Open Awards Access to HE providers agree to participate in standardisation activities.

Where more than one tutor/assessor makes assessment decisions and recommendations for the award of credit to learners on the same Diploma or similar courses it is essential that internal verification processes include the standardisation of their practice.

Open Awards expect providers to plan and undertake standardisation of internally set tasks and the outcomes of internal assessment **at least twice a year**. This allows you to:

- ensure the consistency of the award of credit to learners across different assessors/moderators/modes of delivery/provider and to agree the standards to be achieved.
- compare the assessment strategy and planned assessment tasks used across a unit/s to ensure that they:
  - allow for the generation of sufficient/appropriate/authentic evidence to be produced
  - give fair access to assessment
  - prevent any barriers to achievement
  - respect equality and diversity issues
- ensure that the assessment tasks are written in language that is appropriate to the level and are free from bias
- ensure consistency in the assessment judgements made by assessors on the available evidence
- ensure that adequate constructive feedback is given learners
- ensure that adequate constructive feedback is given to assessors which demonstrates the robustness of the internal moderation of the assessment judgements and identify and share best practices.

The IQA has the responsibility for arranging and facilitating standardisation events.

**Please note, as well as running internal standardisation activities, Access to HE providers are expected to:**

- Contribute evidence for Open Awards standardisation activities upon request.
- Allow subject specialist staff to participate in Open Awards standardisation

Further information about Open Awards national standardisation events can be found in [Open Awards Standardisation](#).

## End of Course Checks

As the course comes towards the end, the IQA has key responsibilities to ensure results can be processed and learners certificated. IQAs should:

- monitor progress against previous action points to make sure any outstanding actions are resolved to avoid result and certification issues
- ensure assessment records are complete and accurate
- ensure evidence of achievement is appropriate, standardised and mapped to the assessment criteria
- ensure that the Markbook for each Diploma is complete and accurate
- ensure that all IQA activities and findings are recorded clearly and effectively
- make plans to ensure that their feedback is taken into account for next year's delivery and unit assessment plans
- ensure that all preparations are in order for the Final Awards Board – including any requests for Referral at FAB, Learner Extension, Aegrotat or Posthumous Awards.

## 10. External Quality Assurance

Each provider is allocated a team of external quality assurance experts to verify the achievement of learners and confirm the award of the QAA Access to HE Diploma, units, credits and grades.

Arrangements relating to the principles of quality assurance under the ERF continue to apply for continuing learners registered before 1<sup>st</sup> August 22 and continuing into 22-23 where:

- adaptations to the method of delivery, units delivered or assessment tasks on the Diploma in response to the pandemic have been approved and commenced **prior to 1 August 2022**, and/or
- students (and/or providers) have experienced extenuating circumstances due to the pandemic, **prior to 1 August 2022**.

Based on evidence presented, a moderator may adjust grades either upwards or downwards to ensure no learner is advantaged or disadvantaged in relation to their peers.

Details of our external quality assurance arrangements, including the moderation cycle, can be found in the Access to HE Provider Guide to Moderation which can be found on the Secure Portal.

### Your External Quality Assurance Team

#### Quality and Standards Advisor (QASA)

Each Access to HE provider is allocated a Quality and Standards Advisor (QASA) whose role is to:

- Ensure that your Access programme operates according to the submission and rules of combinations agreed through the approval process
- Monitor your ongoing compliance against the Open Awards Provider Agreement and QAA regulatory requirements
- Monitor timely progress of your delivery, including grade population on the Markbook
- Act as the first point of contact for all delivery, assessment or IQA queries
- Provide ad hoc guidance as required
- Support Subject Specialist Moderators to complete their work accurately and efficiently
- Collate Diploma Assessment Plans and Unit Assessment Plans for all Diplomas you deliver
- Represent Open Awards at the Final Awards Board meeting
- Take overall responsibility for the secure award of credit
- Support the overall consistency in the award of credit to learners across providers delivering Open Awards Access to HE Diplomas

Open Awards allocates one Quality and Standards Advisor to each provider at the beginning of the academic year. A Quality and Standards Advisor will normally only be allocated to a specific provider for a maximum of four years.



## Subject Specialist Moderators (SSM)

Our team of Subject Specialist Moderators (SSM) externally moderate the achievement of learners and confirm the award of the QAA Access to HE Diploma, units, credits and grades. Each SSM is appointed to externally moderate units for which they possess the knowledge, skills and experience to make valid assessment and quality assurance decisions. In some instances, two or more SSMs may work together on the same Diploma where necessary. The role of the SSM is to:

- Ensure that learners being recommended for the award of credit have achieved the specified learning outcomes
- Ensure that evidence of achievement is fit for purpose both in terms of level and sufficiency
- Ensure that assessment and grading judgements are consistent and reliable with due regard to equity, fairness and national requirements
- Review unit assessment plans and assignment briefs, providing feedback to providers and setting actions as required
- Ensure assessment and grading decisions across different tutors, delivery modes and providers are consistent and in accordance with the QAA Grading Scheme
- Collate assessed work graded at pass, merit and distinction (including 'typical' and borderline grades) for Open Awards standardisation.
- Facilitate subject specialist standardisation events where appropriate.

SSMs will be allocated to individual providers and units in November. Allocations will be made based on the knowledge, skills and experience of the SSM mapped against the units to be sampled. Open Awards will adopt the principle of allocating units to the fewest number of SSMs per provider.

Wherever practicable, units common to multiple providers will be moderated by the same SSM. This will help to ensure common standards of delivery, assessment and IQA and will provide invaluable insights into the effectiveness of different assessment methods to meet the requirements of the unit. SSMs will contribute to Open Awards standardisation activities later in the delivery cycle, building on their experiences from the assessment plan review and moderation of learner work

## External Quality Assurance Activities

### Moderation cycle

Activity	Detail	Date(s)
Annual Compliance reviews	Template documents sent to provider. Date for compliance review agreed.	By 30/09/22
	Provider completes templates and uploads supporting evidence	By 14/10/22
	Compliance review meeting takes place	24/10/22 to 18/11/22
Review of unit assessment arrangements	SSMs undertake desktop reviews	By 25/11/22
	SSMs feedback to providers	By 02/12/22
Subject specialist moderation	Window 1	By 27/01/23
	Window 2	By 28/04/23
	Window 3	By 23/06/23
Mid-Year Compliance	Template documents sent to provider	By 20/01/23
	Provider completes templates and uploads supporting evidence	By 03/02/23
	Review meeting	15/02/23 to 28/02/23
Final Awards Board	QASA	26/06/23 to 07/07/23

## Annual Compliance Review

The QASA allocated to each provider will make contact in the last week of September to schedule an annual compliance review. Once a date has been agreed, the QASA will outline the arrangements for the meeting and will make the following documents available to providers by **30 September 2022** for the provider to review/ complete:

- Data summary for the provider's delivery compared to other providers. This is needed to complete section 2 of the report.
- Provider Improvement Action Plan with details of actions and deadlines that have been set against the providers' provision (including Access to HE).
- Annual Compliance Monitoring Report – providers must complete all lilac cells and upload to the Portal by no later than **14 October 2022**.

The provider must also upload the following documents to the Portal by no later than **14 October 2022**:

- Annual Compliance Review document completed where indicated (lilac cells)
- A Diploma Assessment Plan for each Diploma being delivered – including planned assessment and internal quality assurance dates for all units
- Unit assessment plan and assignment briefs for every unit being delivered (across all Diplomas)
- IQA plan for each Diploma
- Internal quality assurance records for the assessment plans and assignment briefs

The QASA will review the partly completed annual compliance review document and associated documentation before the annual compliance review is due to take place. This is to ensure that they are suitably prepared to initiate discussions and to challenge statements made by the provider that is not supported by evidence.

If the provider does not upload all necessary documentation and/or pre-populate the compliance review document to meet requirements, the annual compliance meeting will be rescheduled if there is insufficient time for the provider to make the missing information available before the meeting.

**There may be a cost incurred where reviews need to be rescheduled. This will adversely affect the provider's risk rating.**

Review meetings will take place between 24/10/22 and 18/11/22. The date will be agreed between the QASA and the provider 30/09/22. Meetings will focus on changes since the previous year, provider planning and quality systems development. The meeting will take normally place remotely via MS Teams with the following aims:

- To confirm provider contacts
- To review the performance of the previous year's Access to HE provision
- To review progress against actions previously set
- To monitor compliance against provider validation criteria
- To review delivery, assessment and internal quality assurance plans for the coming year
- To agree the date, time and location of Final Awards Boards
- To set actions for the coming year
- To identify areas of good practice and key strengths
- To determine the provider's Annual Risk Rating for Access to HE.

The review will follow the format of the Annual Compliance Monitoring Report.

The QASA will check that the Provider is delivering all the mandatory units attached to each Diploma, and likewise, that they are only delivering the units validated for the Diploma using the delivery method they are validated for. Failing to deliver all units/delivering incorrect units will adversely affect the learners and will result in them not achieving the full Diploma.

The QASA's review of delivery, assessment and internal quality assurance plans for the coming year will ensure that:

- planned delivery meets the required rules of combination and the unit specifications
- assessments are scheduled across the delivery period to ensure a reasonable spread of hand in dates for learners and assessors
- the volume and demand of assessments is equitable across units (taking account of relevant credit values)
- a suitable variety of assessment methods have been selected
- learner feedback from previous cohorts has been considered where appropriate
- Diploma Assessment Plans have been subject to a process of internal quality assurance, with evidence of the plan being amended where actions were set by the IQA.

The compliance review process will result in an agreed schedule of subject specialist moderation of learner work throughout the delivery period. This will be agreed with reference to the provider's assessment delivery and IQA plan for each Diploma.

Units will be sampled in three moderation windows:

**January** – units that have been delivered, assessed and IQAd in the autumn term.

**April** – units delivered, assessed and IQAd in the spring term **PLUS** any units identified in the first moderation window needing an additional sample.

**June** – units delivered, assessed and IQAd in the spring term **PLUS** any units needing an additional sample.

The Annual Compliance Report will outline which units will be sampled in each moderation window. Providers must upload their learner's grades to the Open Awards Markbook within four weeks of the unit having been completed. The QASA will monitor grade population on the Open Awards MarkBook to ensure that this schedule is maintained throughout the year.

Actions will be discussed at the review and the QASA will decide on the provider risk rating at the end of the review. Where the QASA is recommending an increase to the risk rating, the QASA will provide evidence for their judgements to the Director of Quality and Standards to make a final decision. Changes to risk ratings will be presented to the Access to HE Committee. Providers may appeal against risk rating changes in line with the Enquiries and Appeals Policy and Procedures which can be found on the [Open Awards website](#).

The completed report will be made available via the Open Awards Portal within ten working days of the review. There may be a delay to publication where risk ratings are being increased. You will be advised of potential delays and a revised date within ten working days.

### **Subject Specialist Moderation**

Subject Specialist Moderators (SSMs) will be allocated to providers and units in November based on the knowledge, skills and experience of the SSM mapped against the units to be sampled. Open Awards adopts the principle of allocating units to the fewest number of SSMs per provider. Wherever practicable, units common to multiple providers are moderated by the same SSM for consistency and standardisation.

SSMs contribute to Open Awards standardisation activities later in the delivery cycle, building on their experiences from the assessment plan review and moderation of learner work

### ***Selection of units for moderation***

Units are selected for moderation as part of the Annual Compliance process based on a range of criteria including:

- units being delivered for the first time by this provider
- units being offered by the provider in more than one Diploma
- units which are delivered in high volume across Open Awards providers
- units with grade profiles that require further investigation to maintain standards
- units for which there are outstanding actions on the Provider Improvement Action Plan from previous years' delivery
- at least one unit from each module within all Diplomas being delivered
- other units selected at random by the QASA.

The number of units sampled will follow a risk-based approach, whereby more units will be selected for Diplomas being delivered for the first time, or those with outstanding actions, whereas established Diplomas with few or no outstanding actions will require less scrutiny.

### ***Review of unit assignment briefs***

In November, SSMs allocated to the selected units will review assessment arrangements, including assignment briefs to ensure they are fit for purpose. This process is designed to ensure that:

- the level and volume of assessment is appropriate to the unit level and size
- a suitable variety of assessment methods have been chosen
- assessment is appropriate for the learners' development, and is inclusive
- all learning outcomes and assessment criteria for each unit are covered
- learners are given sufficient information to understand the assessment tasks
- for graded units, the grade descriptors attached to the individual units are the only ones being assessed
- appropriate grade descriptor components have been chosen
- assignment briefs contain the same grade descriptor components for Merit and Distinction grades
- assignment briefs contain sufficient information on how to achieve Merit or Distinction grades for each grade descriptor
- assignment briefs have been through a process of internal quality assurance in a timely manner, with actions signed off as complete before the assignment brief has been shared with learners

SSMs will review all evidence provided and arrange a feedback session with relevant staff at the provider to discuss any areas of concern and proposed actions. The provider will be given sufficient opportunity to provide clarification and additional evidence in response to the SSMs comments and actions.

A written report will be made available within ten working days of the feedback session. Actions will be added to the Provider Improvement Action Plan (PIAP) in the same timeline.

## Sampling learner work

The units for which learner work is to be sampled is the same as those for which assignment briefs have been reviewed. This is agreed at the annual compliance review. The external moderation of learner work will take place in three windows\*:

**January** – units that have been delivered, assessed and IQAd in the autumn term.

**April** – units delivered, assessed and IQAd in the spring term **PLUS** any units identified in the first moderation window needing an additional sample.

**June** – units delivered, assessed and IQAd in the spring term **PLUS** any units needing an additional sample.

*\* Alternative arrangements may be negotiated for providers with roll on-roll off provision. This will be agreed at annual compliance.*

**Sampling activity can only take place where grades have been added to the Markbook for the relevant unit. If grades have not been added within four weeks of the units being completed (delivered, assessed and IQAd), Open Awards will record this as provider malpractice and apply our Sanctions Policy which can be found via the Portal. This may result in approval being withdrawn for one or more Diploma.**

## Sampling strategy

For **ungraded units**, SSMs will sample **a minimum of two learners** for each named Diploma. Where the same ungraded unit is included in more than one Diploma, the sample must include at least two learners on each named Diploma in which the unit appears.

For **graded units**, SSMs will select **a minimum of three learners** (or a minimum of 10% of all learners - whichever is greater) on each named Diploma within their sample. The sample selected must include at least one learner for each grade being recommended. If no learners are being recommended a specific grade (e.g., no Distinction grades are being recommended), the SSM must select two learners from the other recommended grades to ensure a minimum sample size of three learners.

**Where the same graded unit is included in more than one Diploma**, the sample must include **at least three learners on each named Diploma in which the unit appears**. Where the provider has registered multiple runs for the same Diploma, the sample should be taken from across these course runs.

In addition to sample sizes, the QASA will take a risk-based approach to sampling and identify a representative sample for the course which will give confidence that the assessment and grading decisions are valid. The following criteria may be taken into account:

- Include new assessors
- Include assessors with outstanding actions from previous external moderation
- Include evidence from all sites where the Diploma is delivered
- Evidence that has been subjected to internal quality assurance
- For graded units, the sample must include at least one learner for each grade being recommended. One learner's work for the unit which has been graded as an overall *Pass*
- One learner's work for the unit which has been graded as an overall *Merit*
- One learner's work for the unit which has been graded as an overall *Distinction*
- Evidence considered by assessors to be borderline for the award of credit.
- Evidence of where a reasonable adjustment has been made
- Evidence that has not formed a part of the internal quality assurance sample
- Learners that have achieved the unit by means of Credit Transfer/ RPL
- Include an element of a random selection.

During each moderation window, the Open Awards quality team will identify a sample of learners for moderation and request evidence be uploaded to SharePoint. The provider must upload all evidence in the format requested by the SSM, including following the required folder structure.

**Failure to provide information in the correct format in a timely manner may be deemed to be provider malpractice and apply our Sanctions Policy which can be found via the Portal. This may result in approval being withdrawn for one or more Diploma.**

Providers must upload the following evidence:

- Assessed work for the selected learners
- Assessor feedback
- Learner feedback
- Completed IQA documentation
- Proof of evidence of qualification achievement for all students for which RPL is being claimed (for Level 2 and Level 3 units)

If providers are unable to provide evidence via SharePoint, alternative arrangements must be agreed in advance between the provider and the QASA.

Once all documentation has been made available, the relevant SSM(s) will be given access to the documentation to externally moderate the work.

As part of the moderation process, the SSM will:

- sample assessed work to confirm that the student has achieved against specific learning outcomes and assessment criteria and to help mitigate against malpractice
- assure the appropriateness, consistency, fairness and transparency across assessment and grading decisions
- assure that grade indicator and grade decisions are appropriate, consistent and fair
- ensure that all actions have been completed in a timely manner
- ensure that the providers' internal quality assurance processes and procedures has been effectively applied

SSMs will review all evidence provided, arrange a feedback session with relevant staff at the provider to discuss any areas of concern and proposed actions. The provider will be given sufficient opportunity to provide clarification and additional evidence in response to the SSMs comments and actions.

Outcomes from sampling activity will initially be sent to the QASA who will collate feedback across all provision, follow up with the provider as required and add SMART actions to the Provider Improvement Action Plan. Sampling outcome summaries will be made available via the Secure Portal within 10 working days of the feedback session having taken place.

**All sampling activity must be completed at least 5 working days before the scheduled Final Awards Board for the relevant Diploma(s).**

## Mid-Year Compliance Review

The QASA will undertake a mid-year compliance review for each Access to HE provider between 15/02/23 and 28/02/23. This review is designed to provide a review of progress mid-year and review pastoral support arrangements, learner retention rates and proposed progression. It will also allow Open Awards to meet with staff and learners to obtain timely feedback on the provider's delivery, assessment and grading practices.

The dates for the Mid-Year Compliance Review will be agreed at the Annual Compliance Review. The provider will be expected to upload a self-assessment of in-year performance no less than ten working days before the date of the review meeting.

The provider is responsible for ensuring that appropriate staff and learners are available at the agreed times.

Through this activity, Open Awards will:

- Review admission practices, retention rates and arrangements for learner support
- Meet the provider's Access to HE Co-ordinator, Administrator and as many tutors and internal quality assurers as possible, given teaching commitments
- Ensure the provider can access and is using all necessary documentation
- Review the delivery and assessment strategy and assignment design
- Review internal quality assurance and standardisation practices and ensure that the course team has arranged to participate in Open Awards standardisation and Access to HE Forums
- Meet with learners to obtain feedback on their experiences on the Diploma
- Review evidence supporting internally approved RPL claims
- Identify good practice and key strengths
- Review the progress of actions outlined in previous moderation reports and set new actions as necessary
- Review the progress of any areas of concern identified through the annual compliance review
- Review the effectiveness of blended delivery and assessment arrangements (where adopted)
- Review the timeliness of grade entry on the Markbook.

Actions will be discussed at the review and the QASA will decide on the provider risk rating at the end of the review. A final version of the report will be made available via the Open Awards Portal within ten working days of the review. There may be a delay to publication where risk ratings are being increased. You will be advised of potential delays and a revised date within ten working days.

## Additional Monitoring

If you do not meet the obligations of your validation as a Provider and/or fail to address areas of concern highlighted by the moderation team within their Action Plans and Reports, we reserve the right to request additional visits to monitor your activities. As part of such monitoring activities your risk rating can be reviewed within year.

Please note: You may be charged for additional monitoring and moderation activities in line with our standard pricing information which can be found on the Open Awards [website](#).

## Open Awards Standardisation

Open Awards standardisation activities will take place from September 2022 onwards. These sessions will cover:

- Assessment Planning & Assignment Writing
- The roles of Assessors and IQA
- Grading of work
- Tracking and marking

Standardisation is a vital component of any robust quality assurance system and as a condition of provider approval all Open Awards Access to HE providers agree to participate in standardisation activities, both internally and externally.

As a minimum requirement each provider **must**:

- Plan and undertake standardisation of internally set tasks and the outcomes of internal assessment (at least twice a year). Please see [Internal Standardisation](#).
- Contribute assessed material to Open Awards standardisation activities and events upon request. This should include:
  - copies of assignment briefs
  - samples of completed graded assignments
  - samples of completed ungraded assignments
- Allow subject specialist staff to participate in and attend standardisation activities organised by Open Awards

Open Awards runs a series of standardisation activities that are accessible to all Access to HE providers. The purpose of Open Awards standardisation is to:

- promote and achieve consistency of assessment and moderation practice
- ensure consistency in the application of level and credit across Open Awards Access provision
- ensure that standards are comparable
  - across providers (and satellite sites)
  - across different types of providers (colleges / private providers)
  - across different subject areas
  - across modes of delivery (blended / distance learning)
  - over time.
- identify and develop agreed points of reference by which standards can be referenced and agree processes for them to be applied and reviewed
- ensure that a full range of assessment activities allow for the generation of appropriate assessment evidence
- inform the quality improvement cycle by identifying training and development issues
- share and disseminate best practices.

Sessions will be led by QASAs and take place online. You will be given access to an online repository of activities, training and opportunities to share best practices. Any assignments used for standardisation will be anonymised. The events are designed to be professional development opportunities opportunity to network with peers.



## 11. Awarding

Once all delivery, assessment, internal and external quality assurance processes have been completed, recommendations for the award of credits, grades and Access to HE Diplomas are considered by a Final Awards Board (FAB). The role of the FAB is to make sure that student awards and results are properly managed.

FABs will normally take place between 26/06/23 and 07/07/23 once all moderation has been completed and grades have been submitted by the provider. For providers offering roll-on-roll-off provision and those not operating to academic years, the FAB will take place within four weeks of the completion of the course.

### Award through Extenuation

In some exceptional circumstances, through no fault of their own, an Access to HE Diploma learner (or group of learners) may not have been able to complete all the assessments set. There may be a wide range of factors through which a learner's ability to complete was impacted by significant personal difficulties beyond their control. Circumstances or the impact of existing circumstances on the learner is normally unforeseen when the learner starts the course.

Providers should refer to the Open Awards Reasonable Adjustments and Special Considerations Policy and Procedures for further information.

Where a learner cannot complete all assessments, they may still be awarded unit(s) that make up the Diploma, through extenuation. This will require the provider to draw upon either further adaptations to assessments or alternate lines of evidence to determine whether the unit can be awarded.

Where a learner cannot be assessed, the learner may still be awarded unit(s) that make up the Diploma, through extenuation. The tutor/provider will draw upon either further adaptations to assessments or alternate lines of evidence to determine whether the unit can be awarded.

More detailed information can be found in Award Through Extenuation Guidance - Access to HE which can be found on the Secure Portal.

### What does the Final Awards Board do?

The Final Awards Board (FAB) is a formal meeting which must take place at the end of the Diploma course following all external moderation activity and is designed to:

- Approve the Award of Credit, grades and Access to HE Diplomas
- Consider cases of academic misconduct, extenuating circumstances and appeals.
- Ensure the provider's ongoing adherence to the QAA licensing criteria
- Confirm the provider's approval status with Open Awards for the next academic year

The roles and responsibilities of the FAB Committee are outlined below:

Role	Responsibility
<b>Chair</b> <i>A senior member of the provider staff such as Access Coordinator, Curriculum Manager or Quality Manager.</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To chair the meeting in accordance with the Open Awards template agenda.</li> <li>• To ensure that all relevant paperwork is available to the QASA, as required.</li> <li>• To confirm the provider's ongoing adherence to the QAA licensing criteria.</li> <li>• To sign the minutes as a true and accurate record.</li> </ul>
<b>Quality and Standards Advisor (QASA)</b> <i>The individual allocated to the provider by Open Awards for the delivery period.</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To confirm approval of all awards of the Access to HE Diploma.</li> <li>• To confirm the award of credit for any students who do not fully meet the rules of combination for the award of the Diploma.</li> <li>• To agree appropriate deadlines for referrals submitted to FAB.</li> <li>• To lead discussions on the provider's profile held by Open Awards</li> <li>• To confirm (or otherwise) the provider's status as an Open Awards Access to HE Diploma provider for the next academic year.</li> <li>• To sign the minutes as a true and accurate record.</li> </ul>
<b>AVA Representative</b> <i>A named member of Open Awards staff trained in the constitution and conduct of the FAB.</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To confirm the meeting followed due process and was conducted fairly.</li> <li>• To document decisions taken with regard to particular students and report to the AVA immediately following the meeting.</li> <li>• To outline processes for recommending candidates for the Keith Fletcher Award.</li> <li>• To sign the minutes as a true and accurate record.</li> </ul>
<b>Scribe</b> <i>Possibly the examinations officer with responsibility for submitting the results via Markbook.</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To take accurate minutes of the meeting on the Open Awards template in an electronic format.</li> <li>• To ensure that all students are accurately reported in the correct section of the minutes.</li> <li>• To ensure that the minutes include a full and accurate record of all decisions agreed.</li> <li>• To sign the minutes as a true and accurate record.</li> <li>• To make the minutes available to Open Awards within 24 hours of the meeting.</li> </ul>
<b>Course Representative(s)</b> <i>Either course leader or IQA. In some cases, it may be appropriate for both to attend.</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To present fully completed documentation to support all awards and credits for which approval is being requested.</li> <li>• To present fully completed documentation regarding extenuating circumstances.</li> <li>• To answer any questions relating to the achievement of individual students on the pathway.</li> <li>• To be present for the whole time that their pathway is under consideration.</li> </ul>

The FAB must be held in an appropriate setting (either on-site or remotely) and follow a set agenda:

### **Part A - Scope**

The roles and responsibilities of each member of the FAB committee are agreed. The Chair must advise the Committee that at no point during the meeting should any information be given about any HEI offers any student may be holding. The Chair must list the courses being considered within the meeting, taking all courses within each pathway in turn.

If any member of the FAB Committee has a conflict of interest (actual or potential), they must declare it. The Committee must agree on an appropriate method of mitigation, which may include individuals leaving the room some of all of the meeting. The provider must ensure that the meeting remains quorate at all times.

### **Part B - Changes to grades**

Confirmation of any students whose grade has been amended through the external moderation process. Subject Specialist Moderators and QASAs are authorised to amend grades where the grade recommended by the Provider does not align with the evidence presented by the learner. The provider must declare each grade amendment in turn and minute these amendments. Open Awards has a regulatory requirement to document these occurrences.

The Chair of the meeting must ensure that all amended grades have been accurately recorded on the Markbook. If changes have not been made before the FAB committee meeting, the provider must arrange for these amendments to be made before awards can be confirmed. You will be supported by the Customer Service Team to complete this within the FAB.

### **Part C - Students with Extenuating Circumstances**

The FAB Committee must consider any cases where extenuating circumstances have affected a student's performance in more than one area or in a way that falls outside the provider's normal procedures. The provider must make available to the Committee all appropriate request forms, supporting paperwork including rationale and audit trails for decisions made. The minutes must provide a summary of each case.

### **Extensions beyond the FAB date**

If a learner does not complete all the work required for the Access to HE Diploma before the FAB they may be given an extension to complete the work, if there are extenuating circumstances. The completed work must then be assessed and internally quality assured in the normal way. At the FAB the QASA will agree the process and timescale for externally quality assuring the achievement of the student and the award of the Diploma. This will be completed remotely.

### **On-Course Referrals**

When a learner has not achieved all the assessment criteria for a unit following either of the scenarios below and due to special circumstances, the provider may request an additional opportunity for a learner to resubmit work in order to achieve credit. Learners can be granted up to 15 credits from referred work.

- If the first submission was late and failed to address all assessment criteria.
- If resubmitted work failed to address all of the assessment criteria.

For more information please refer to [Referrals](#).

This part of the agenda provides details of all on-course referrals made by the provider to Open Awards. The FAB Committee will receive information on each referral made regardless of whether or not they were agreed. The provider must provide copies of referral request forms, supporting evidence for each referral and evidence of the provider's decision. The minutes must record all on-course referral requests, whether approved or not. All students must be listed on a log of referral decisions which must be made available to the FAB Committee.

### **Referrals submitted at the FAB**

Where referral requests are made near the end of the course, the request may be made at subject specialist moderation and approved at the Final Awards Board using the RRF Request for a Referral at FAB Form available through the Secure Portal. Copies of the form(s) are to be forwarded to Open Awards with the minutes of the Final Awards Board meeting.

For each agreed referral submitted at the FAB, the Committee must agree the revised submission deadline and the date for final moderation. For learners planning to go to university at the start of the next academic year, the revised submission deadline must ensure that the submission, assessment and internal verification is completed by no later than 31st July. For learners not planning to go to university immediately, the deadline must be no later than 31st August.

All referrals submitted at the FAB must be recorded in the minutes regardless of whether or not they were approved.

### **Extensions beyond the FAB date**

If a learner does not complete all the work required for the Access to HE Diploma before the FAB they may be given an extension to complete the work, if there are extenuating circumstances. The completed work must then be assessed and internally quality assured in the normal way. At the FAB the QASA will agree the process and timescale for externally quality assuring the achievement of the student and the award of the Diploma. This will be completed remotely.

### **Aegrotat Awards**

The provider may request an Aegrotat Award for a learner who, due to extenuating circumstances, has been unable to complete their Access to HE Diploma course but would have done so otherwise and who have achieved at least 30 of the credits required for the Access to HE Diploma. Requests for Aegrotat Awards cannot be considered at the FAB. All Aegrotat requests must be submitted via the Secure Portal along with supporting evidence before external moderation is completed. Open Awards reviews and makes recommendations on all requests before the FAB Committee meeting.

All requests for Aegrotat Awards are recorded in the minutes regardless of whether or not they were approved by Open Awards.

### **Posthumous Awards**

A posthumous award may be made at the discretion of the FAB provided that the request is supported by the next of kin of the learner. All requests are considered by the FAB Committee and must be recorded in the minutes regardless of whether or not they were approved.

### **Other Extenuating Circumstances**

Providers must have appropriate procedures for dealing with cases of extenuating circumstances and in most cases, extenuating circumstances that affect achievement on individual units are handled at course level, with appropriate action and decisions taken according to the provider's approved procedures. Course teams must document cases of extenuating circumstances and the action taken and the Open Awards Quality and Standards Advisor must confirm that appropriate procedures are in place and operated consistently.

The FAB Committee will consider cases where extenuating circumstances have affected performance in more than one area or in any other way that falls outside the provider's normal processes.

Where no prior action has been taken, cases of extenuating circumstances that are brought to the FAB must have been considered by the course team and external moderator prior to the meeting. Cases must be fully documented, and include evidence which is presented in a standardised manner and with a recommendation to the FAB Committee on whether each individual claim for extenuating circumstances should be supported and to what degree.

### **Award through Extenuation**

In some exceptional circumstances, it is recognised that not all assessments can take place and in such circumstances the award through extenuation is an arrangement that can support the award of unit(s) that make up the Diploma.

There will be a range of triggers that impact a learner's ability to complete their studies through no fault of their own that can be assessed through the award through extenuation arrangements. Potential triggers may include student or provider challenges. In these exceptional circumstances, the learner will be required to present sufficient evidence to be awarded through extenuation.

More detailed information can be found in Award Through Extenuation Guidance - Access to HE which can be found on the Secure Portal.

Providers must submit an Application for Access to HE Diploma Award by Extenuation Form along with supporting evidence for each learner for whom extenuating circumstances are being applied for. Forms are available from the Secure Portal and will be reviewed by the QASA and Subject Specialists Moderators who will make recommendations to the FAB Committee. The FAB will:

- consider whether the application and associated evidence provided suggest, on balance of probability, that the student's achievement has been compromised by circumstances beyond their control
- review available evidence to ascertain whether it provides sufficient evidence for the award of the unit(s) (i.e. achievement of associated learning outcomes)
- review available evidence (established/alternate) to ascertain whether it provides sufficient evidence for the grading of the unit (graded units only).

Where an award through extenuation is rejected by the FAB, consideration will be given to other awarding arrangements including:

- partial achievement
- an aegrotat award
- extension to the course of study.

### **Part D - Students WITHOUT full achievement of the Diploma**

Learners that did not complete the full Diploma are named in the FAB minutes against the relevant category:

- Withdrawn with no credit (along with the reason for each student's withdrawal)
- Continuing (along with the number of credits achieved, an explanation as to why they were unable to complete within the course dates and an estimated date for their completion).
- Partial achievers (along with the number of credits achieved and reasons for partial achievement).

## **Part E - Recommendations for Award**

The FAB Committee considers all learners for whom the provider has submitted a request for RPL or Credit Transfer in line with the Open Awards Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) Policy and Procedures. It does not apply to Level 2 exemptions permitted as part of Diploma validation. Requests for RPL/Credit Transfer cannot be considered at the FAB. The provider must provide copies of RPL Request Forms, supporting evidence for each request and evidence of Open Awards decision. All approved RPL requests are recorded in the minutes.

The learners recommended for full Diploma achievement are named at the FAB in turn for each Diploma. The Committees checks that the Markbook accurately records their achievement. Learner names do not need to be included in the minutes.

## **Part F - Misconduct and Appeals**

The provider must provide details of any cases of academic misconduct that have arisen and been actioned within the year. The Provider must give assurances to the FAB that their own documented procedures were followed. The FAB may review relevant documentation including an audit trail of actions taken to assure itself that due process was followed and that decisions were fair and accurate. Refer to the QAA Grading Scheme Handbook, section E (page 5), for further details regarding Academic Misconduct.

The grounds for appeal about the Award of Credits or grades on the Access to HE Diploma are restricted to cases where:

- there is evidence of administrative or procedural error
- there are extenuating circumstances that, for good reason, could not be notified prior to the Final Awards Board

The provider must provide details of any appeals made by students along with a summary of the actions followed by the provider. The Provider must give assurances to the FAB that their own documented procedures were followed. The FAB may review relevant documentation including an audit trail of actions taken to assure itself that due process was followed and that decisions were fair and accurate.

Appeals escalated to Open Awards through the Enquiries, Complaints and Appeals Policy which are subject to ongoing investigation will be excluded from the discussions.

## **Part G - Confirmation of Awards**

Following consideration of all previous agenda items, the QASA decides whether to confirm the awards of credit, grades and Access to HE Diplomas. The FAB Committee will do likewise. Please note: the FAB Committee cannot approve without QASA confirmation.

## **Part H - Ongoing Provider Status**

Based on the previous agenda items, the QASA confirms whether the provider is approved, approved with conditions or not approved to continue delivering Open Awards Access to HE Diplomas. If conditions are identified, these must be listed in the minutes along with a deadline for completion. If the provider is not approved, the reasons must be stated in the minutes.

## **Part I - Formal declaration**

The Chair, QASA, AVA Representative and Scribe must all sign the minutes as a declaration that they are a true and accurate record of the meeting. It is the scribe's responsibility to return a signed copy of the minutes to Open Awards **within 24 hours** of the Final Awards Board. Results cannot be processed until signed minutes have been received by Open Awards.

The Provider must retain a copy of the minutes for its own records. Certificates cannot be produced until after the signed FAB minutes have been returned to Open Awards.

## 12. Results and Certification

Confirmed results will be released to providers no later than the deadline for results to be uploaded to UCAS (in 2022 this was on 27th July). Providers should check with Open Awards when confirmed results will be released to them.

### Open Awards commitment

- We will release confirmed results to providers no later than the deadline for results to be uploaded to UCAS.
- We will confirm with each provider the exact date that confirmed results will be released to them.
- We will continue to issue results to roll-on/roll-off provision and other provision as usual.
- We will make available information about results (student outcomes and grading data information) to QAA, upon request.
- We will ensure that information and communications are made available to our stakeholders on the arrangements associated with 'Results'.

### Provider commitments

- You must notify students when confirmed results will be released by Open Awards.
- You must continue to collect grading data information and store such data in an accessible way.
- Presentation of results (student outcomes and grading data information) should be made available to AVAs, or QAA, upon request.

## Recording Results

Once a learner's assignment(s) for a unit have been assessed and an overall grade given for the unit, the grade should be recorded on the Open Awards [Markbook](#) via the Secure Portal

Results must be entered by a single portal account holder. This may be the Access to HE Administrator or by another nominated contact. **Portal accounts must not be shared or logged on multiple times simultaneously as this can lead to duplicated results.**

**Please Note:** Once a portal account holder has begun entering results on a course run, only that named user should continue to enter results for that course run. All other portal users must not enter or amend results for that course run.

All Access to HE results, must be entered via the Markbook and not via the Direct Entry of results system. Results should not be fully submitted until all results have been recommended. Results added to the Markbook can be amended for individual learners at any time prior to submission at the end of the year, for example if they have been entered incorrectly. Results will be added to a basket for the course until grades have been entered for all learners and for each unit they have achieved.

At the initial compliance review, Open Awards will obtain a copy of the scheme of work/delivery schedule for each Diploma being delivered. This will help us to know when to expect unit grades to be added to the Markbook for your courses.

**Failure to upload grades to the Markbook in a timely manner will delay the timing of subject specialist moderation, increase your risk rating and may incur additional costs.**

## Amending results on the Markbook

Results on the [Markbook](#) should be checked regularly for accuracy and can be corrected at any time throughout the duration of the course before submission. Changes to the award of credit post certification will incur an administration fee.

## Processing Results Learner Checking

We recommend that you ask your learners to check their final results before submission using the 'Access to HE Results Confirmation' report found on the portal. You do not need to send copies of this signed confirmation to us but you should store them for future reference should the learner contest their grades once certificated.

## Submitting Your Results

Once all moderation has taken place and any required changes to results have been made via the portal, the person who has added results to the basket should immediately [submit them](#) in readiness for the Final Awards Board (FAB).

If you discover errors to the submitted results, you should contact the Open Awards customer service team immediately. You must also make the Subject Specialist Moderator aware of the error. See the [Secure Portal Guide](#) for information on submitting results.

The submitted results will be approved by the Quality and Standards Advisor at the Final Awards Board, or immediately after it has taken place. Once results have been approved, Open Awards will process the certificates.

## Processing of Results by Open Awards

Your results will be processed and certificates dispatched within 10 working days of the Final Awards Board. To ensure this service standard can be met, results must have been submitted before the Final Awards Board and minutes must be received within 24 hours of the FAB **Please ensure that there is someone available to deal with results queries from us during this time as you may be asked to resubmit results. This named person will be reflected on the FAB minutes and should have appropriate Portal access.**

The results processing stage includes the following steps:

1. Submitted results will be verified by the Quality and Standards Advisor
2. Results will be initially assessed. Completed and signed minutes must be received for this stage to begin.
3. Any queries will be raised regarding results with the Access to HE Coordinator, Administrator or nominated contact.
4. Any learners who cannot be processed due to outstanding query will be held back. It is essential that this is avoided, and queries are resolved quickly with the provider.
5. Results will be entered for learners and awards reports generated
6. Award reports to be sent to and checked by providers who must confirm that results are correct. Please make sure that the contact (named at the FAB) is available to confirm these reports otherwise there may be a delay in your learner receiving their certificates.
7. Open Awards generate certificates. E certificates will be available immediately for providers to download and make available to learners via electronic means and hard copies will be posted to the Access to HE Administrator or nominated contact by recorded delivery
8. Access to HE Administrator or nominated contact confirms receipt of certificates using guidance provided on letter accompanying certificates.



## Certificating

Learner certificates will only be issued to you once:

- The Markbook has been fully completed, submitted and verified.
- Signed copies of the FAB minutes have been received.
- Award reports have been checked and verified by a named contact.
- Certificates have been checked by Open Awards.

Learners who have achieved the full Diploma will receive a Diploma qualification certificate and the unit transcript which may cover 2 pages. Learners who have not achieved the Diploma but have been awarded units will receive a unit transcript only. All your certificates will be issued to you together, except in cases of learners with outstanding queries ie extensions, referrals etc.

Certificates will be sent by post (Royal Mail Recorded - First Class) for delivery to the Access to HE Administrator unless we have been notified of alternative arrangements. They should be checked immediately and distributed securely to learners as soon as possible to avoid any issues with their university application.

E certificates will also be available to view and download for all providers who have requested e-certification. PDF versions of certificates will be available for distribution to your learners through secure electronic means.

Providers must confirm receipt of printed certificates within 5 working days.

Open Awards will upload learner results to the UCAS portal prior to the deadline date provided by UCAS.

All Access to HE certificates (e-certificates and hard copies) have a unique Authentiqua (QR) codes embedded, scanning the QR code provides secure authentication of the certificate.

## Certificate Reissues

Learners can request a copy of their certificate directly through Open Awards or via their place of study. There is a certificate reissue charge of £30 or they can pay £15 for a statement of results. Universities and overseas validation agencies usually request an original certificate.

## 13. Appeals

Procedures for appeals the standard procedures detailed in the QAA Grading Scheme Handbook Section C: Using the Grade Descriptors in Assessment and outlined in the Open Awards Enquiries and Appeals Policy and Procedures which is available via the Secure Portal.

The grounds for appeal about the Award of Credits or grades on the Access to HE Diploma are restricted to cases where:

- there is evidence of administrative or procedural error
- there are extenuating circumstances that, for good reason, could not be notified prior to the Final Awards Board

Providers must ensure that all learners have information on and access to their appeal process. Learners are advised to follow the colleges internal appeals procedure to ensure that the provider has had opportunity to investigate the matter internally. Once a formal outcome has been communicated to the learner, and if they wish to continue the appeal, the learner is advised to formally write to Open Awards with their concerns. The matter will then be investigated in line with the Enquiries and Appeals Policy and Procedures.

**Please note:** Suggested learner grades must be subjected to external moderation and are therefore not confirmed until Final Awards Board has taken place.

## 14. Ongoing Support

We have a dedicated A2HE Support team here at Open Awards who are on hand to answer any questions you may have and point you in the right direction. We run termly support sessions with our A2HE Providers which includes support from your QASA and the Open Awards Customer Service team with the aim of checking in and supporting you on your Open Awards A2HE journey.